

A Centaur's Life

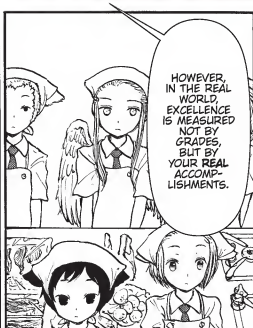
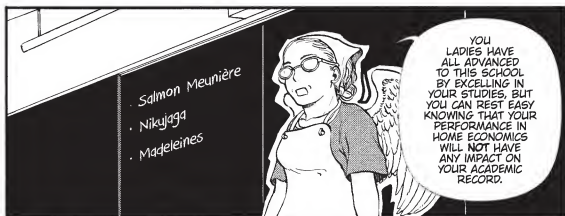


story & art
KEI MURAYAMA

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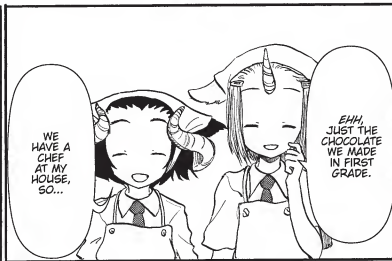
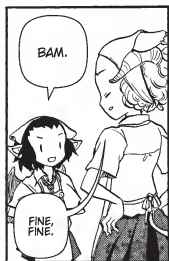
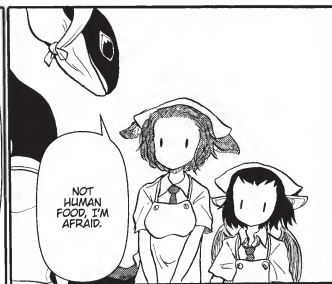
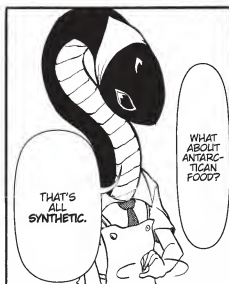
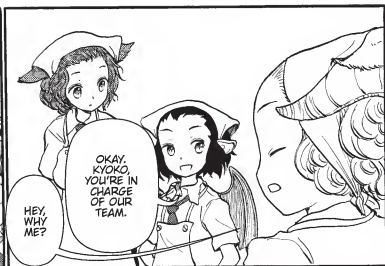


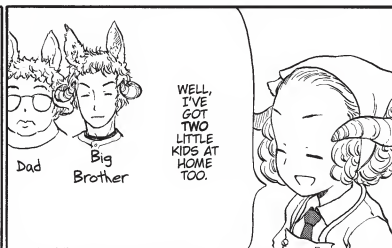
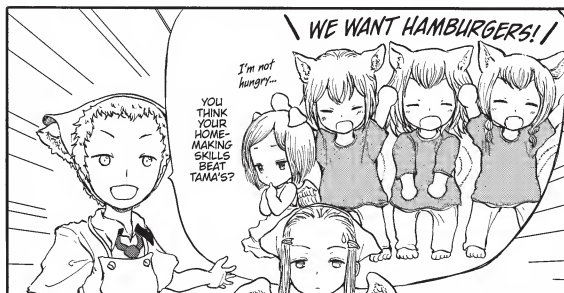
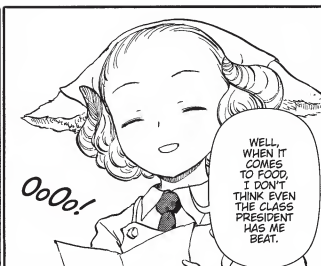


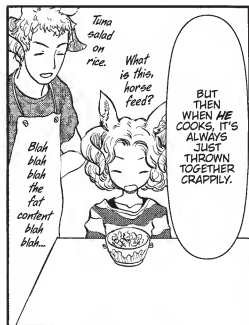


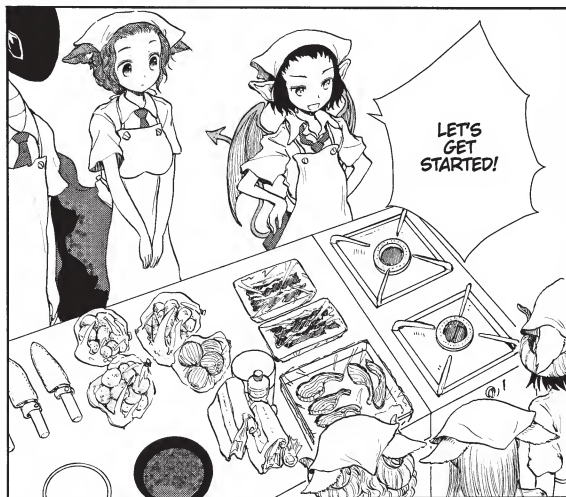
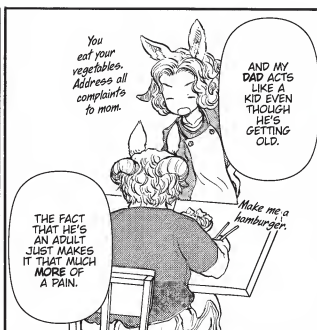
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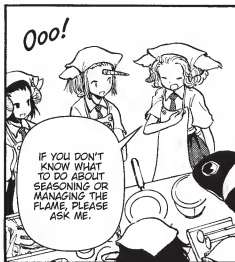
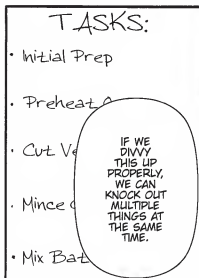


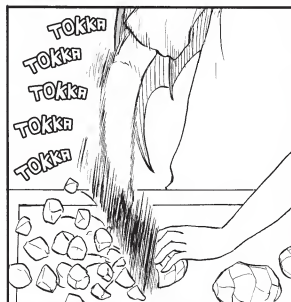
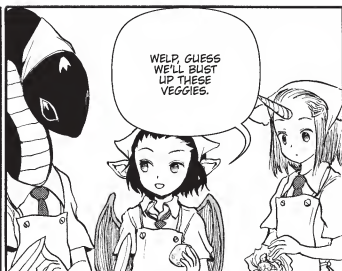


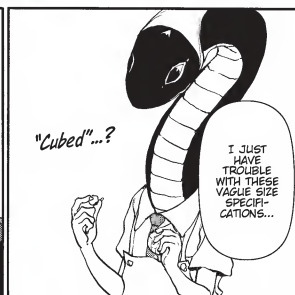
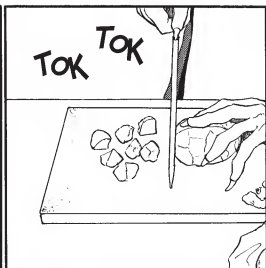
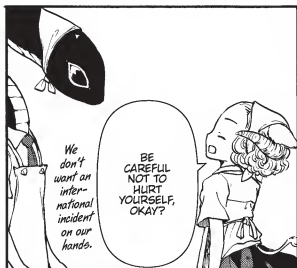


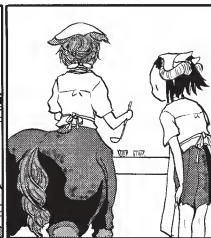
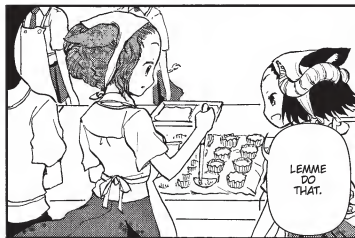
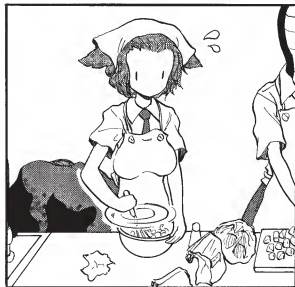
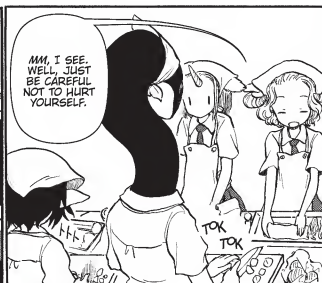
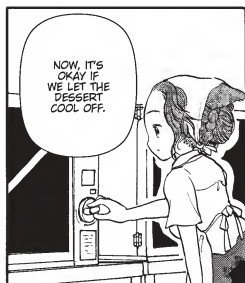


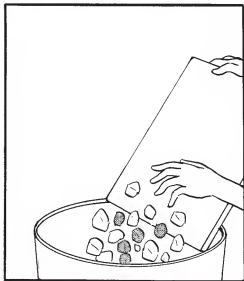
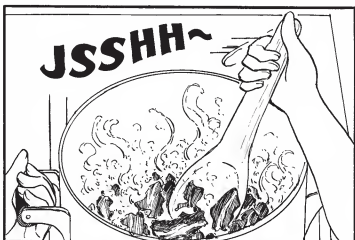


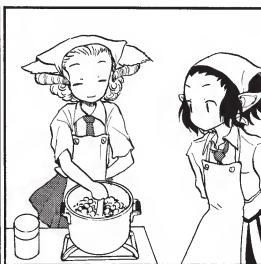
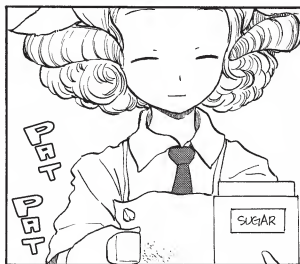
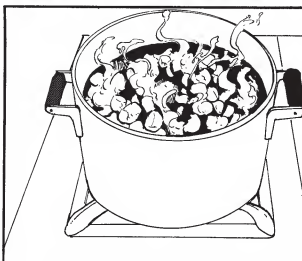
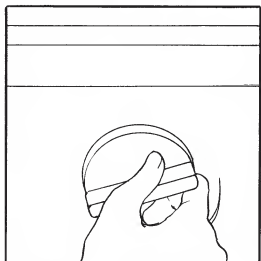
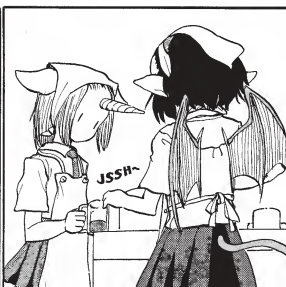


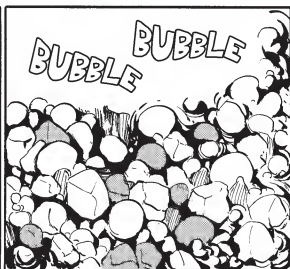
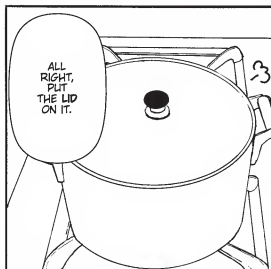
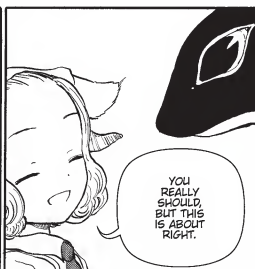


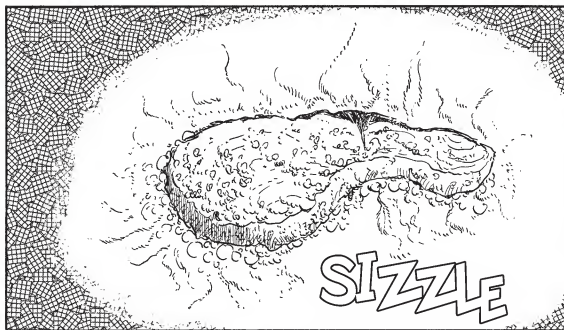
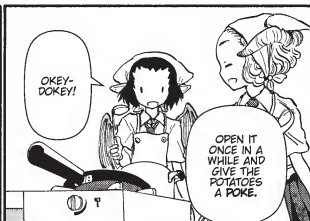
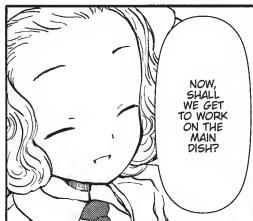
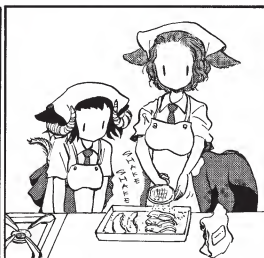


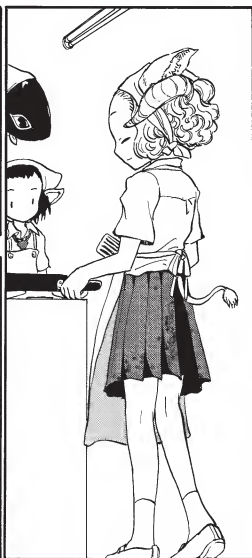
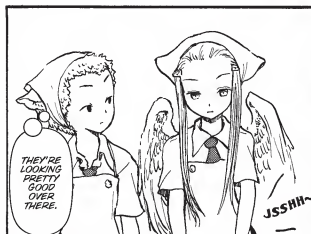
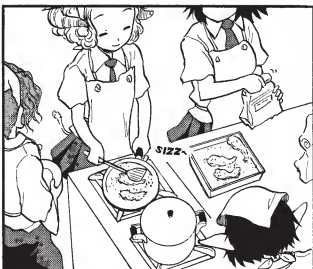
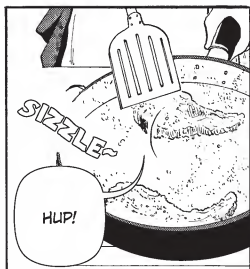


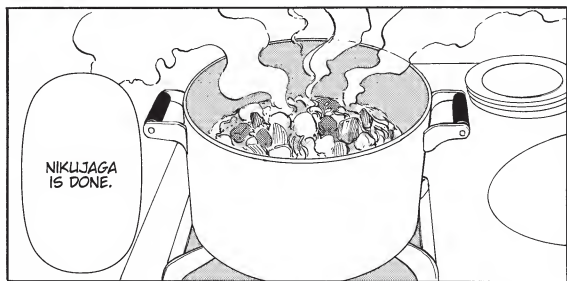
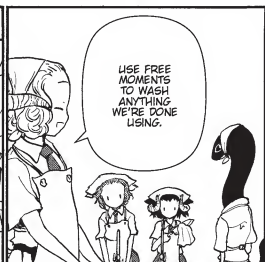
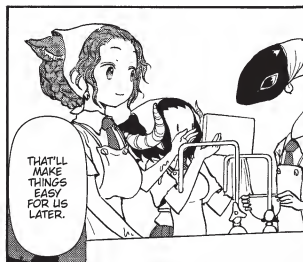
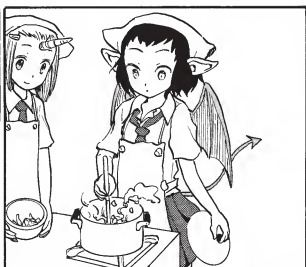


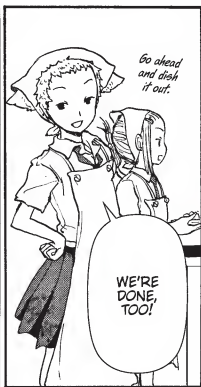
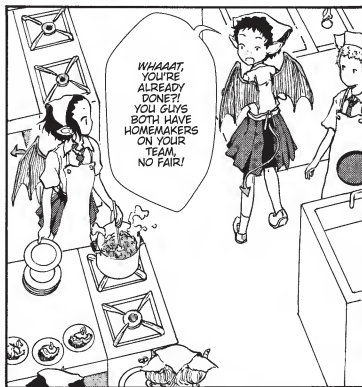
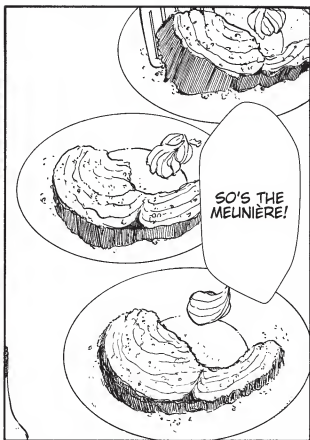
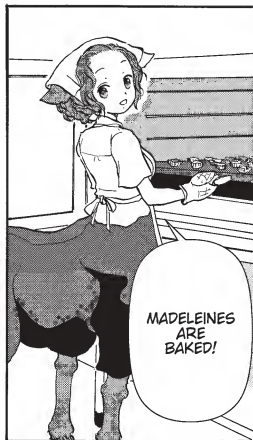






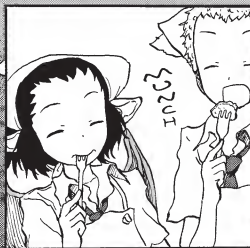


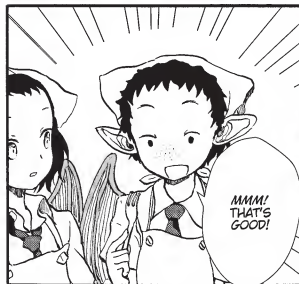
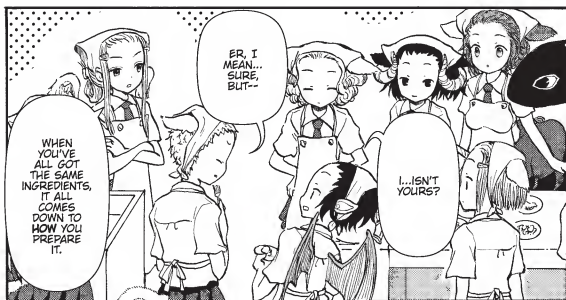


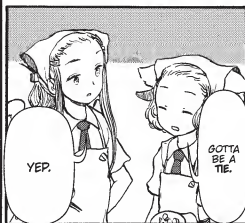
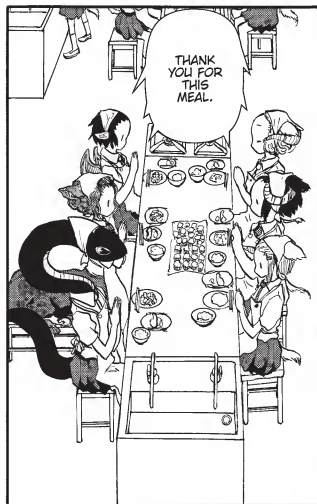
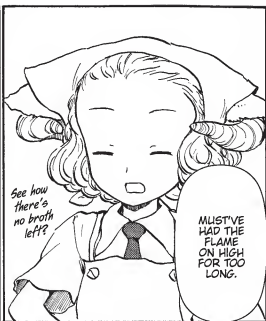


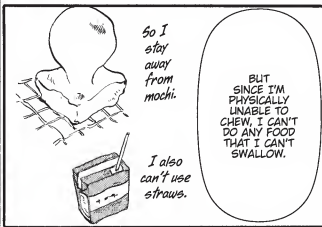
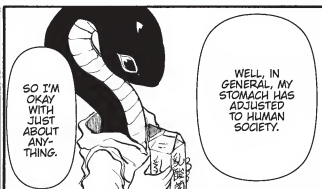
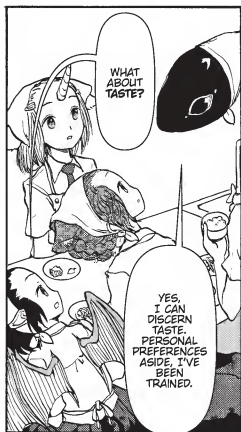
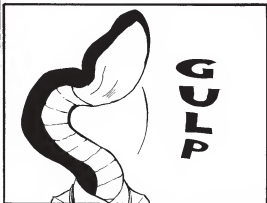


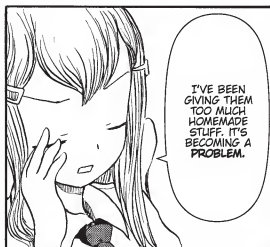
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DELICIOUS!

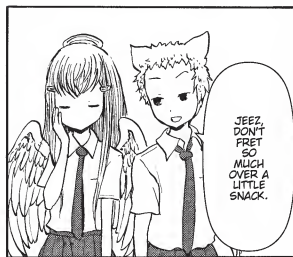
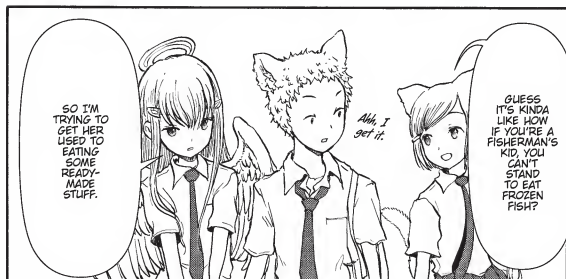
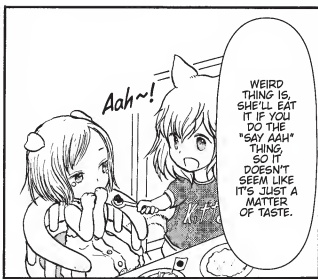
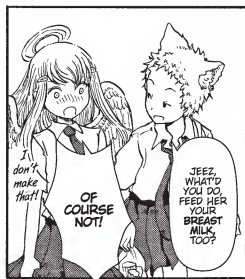


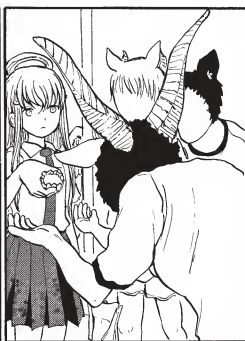
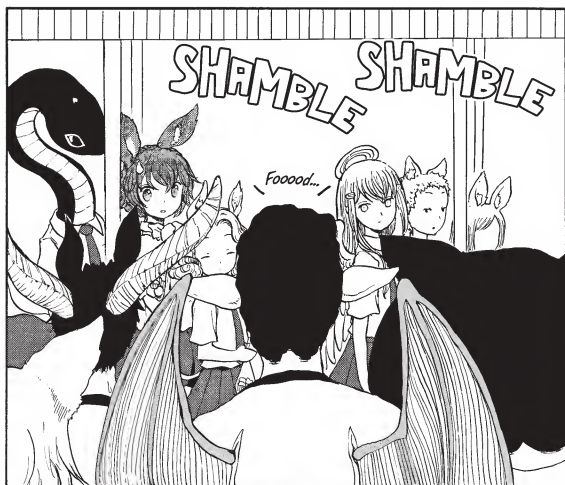


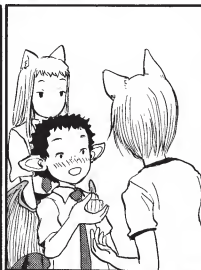
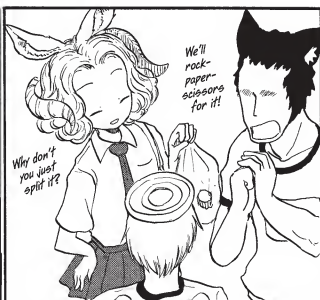




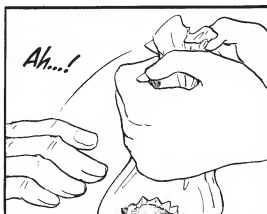
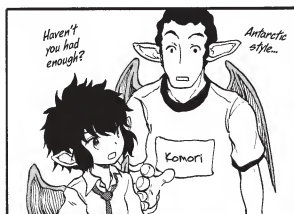
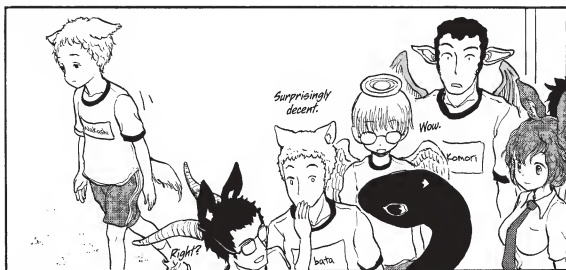










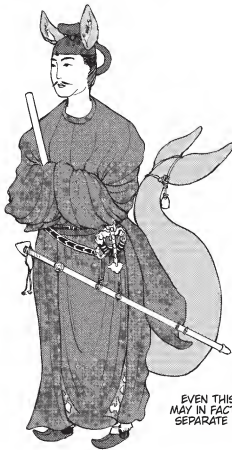


A CentaUr's Life

HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION) SHOUTOKU TAISHI (574-622)

GRANDSON OF THE EMPEROR KINMEI, AS WELL AS OF SOGA NO INAME, WHOSE FAMILY WAS IN POWERFUL STANDING AT THE TIME. THOUGH HIS REAL NAME WAS UYAYADO, HE WAS KNOWN BY SEVERAL OTHERS, SUCH AS TOYOSATOMIMI AND KAMITSU-NO-MIYA. SHOUTOKU SERVED AS A POLITICIAN UNDER THE FIRST EMPRESS IN JAPANESE HISTORY, EMPRESS SUIKO. APART FROM HIS MANY POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS, WHICH INCLUDED THE PRESERVATION OF BUDDHISM, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE HORYOJI, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "TWELVE LEVEL CAP AND RANK SYSTEM" AND THE SEVENTEEN-ARTICLE CONSTITUTION, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF AN AMBASSADOR TO CHINA, HE ALSO LEAVES BEHIND A NUMBER OF FAMOUS EPISODES, SUCH AS HIS LEGENDARY ABILITY TO LISTEN TO AND COMPREHEND TEN MEN'S CLAIMS AT ONCE.

HOWEVER, WITH TAISHI ALREADY COMING TO BE REGARDED AS A SAINTLY FIGURE BY THE TIME THE *NIHON SHOKU* WAS WRITTEN JUST A CENTURY AFTER HIS DEATH, A NUMBER OF THESE EPISODES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIALLY EMBELLISHED, EXAGGERATED, OR ELSE HAVING HAPPENED TO A SEPARATE FIGURE. SOME THEORIES WOULD DISPUTE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SHOUTOKU TAISHI, BUT SINCE LITERARY MATERIALS FROM THIS ANCIENT TIME ARE SO LIMITED, IT IS DIFFICULT TO COMPARE TEXTS FOR CORROBORATING FACTUAL CONSISTENCIES OR REACH ANY DECISIVE CONCLUSION ON THE MATTER.



EVEN THIS IMAGE
MAY IN FACT BE OF A
SEPARATE PERSON.

THE
WERETIGER
IS ONE
EXTINCT
BREED OF
HOMO
SAPIENS--
THAT IS,
THE HUMAN
BEINGS
OF THE
MODERN DAY.

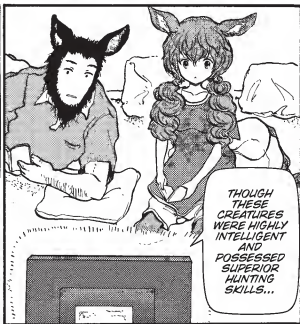


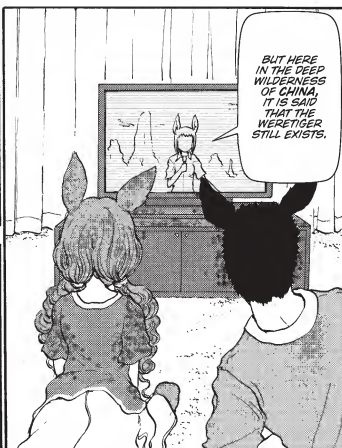
UMA World Discovery Crew

...THEY
ARE SAID
TO HAVE
DIED OFF
AFTER
OVER-
HUNTING
THEIR
PREY.

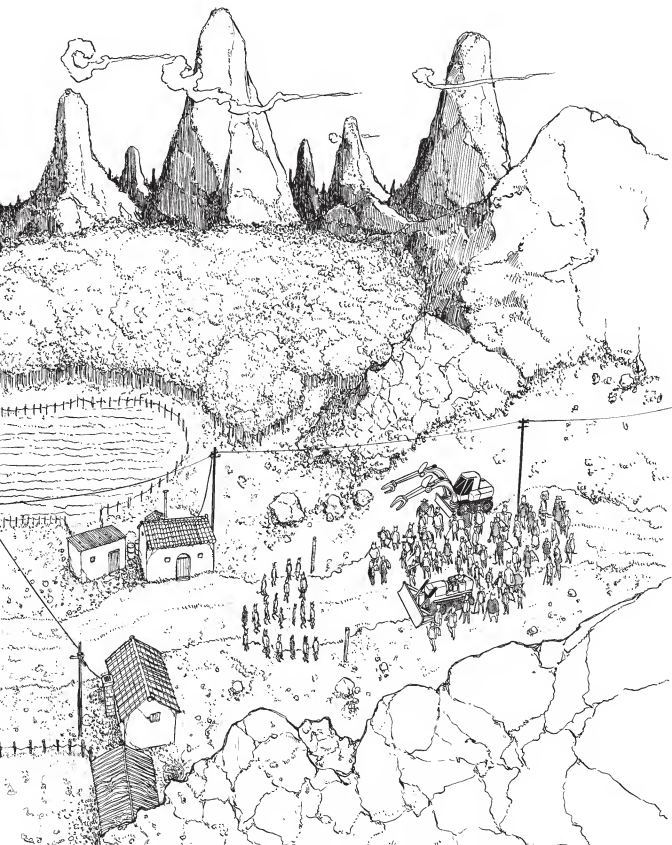


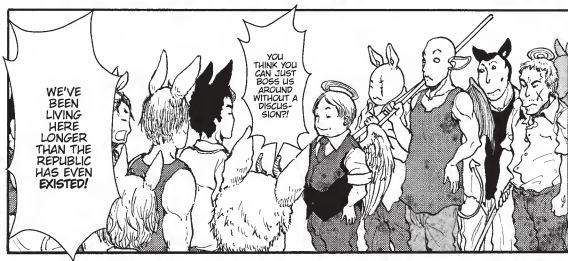
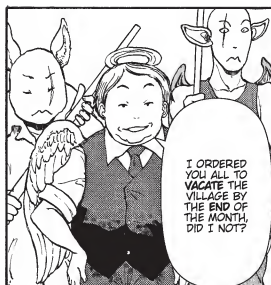
THOUGH
THESE
CREATURES
WERE HIGHLY
INTELLIGENT
AND
POSSESSED
SUPERIOR
HUNTING
SKILLS...





CHAPTER 39







**YOU'RE
THE
ONES
BEING
INSULT-
ING!**



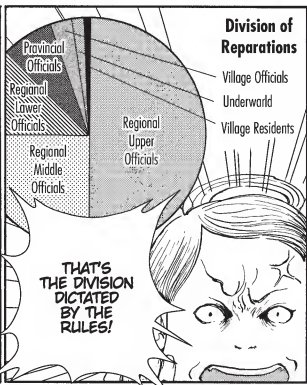
**WHY,
YOU!**

**DON'T
INSULT
US!
THAT
WON'T
BUY
SQUAT!!**



**YOU
FIGURE
OUT
THE
REST
DEMOCRATI-
CALLY!**

**EITHER
YOU TAKE
THE MONEY
AND GET
OUT, OR
WE'LL
BEAT
YOU OUT!**



**Division of
Reparations**

Village Officials

Underworld

Village Residents

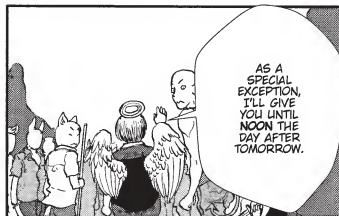
Provincial
Officials

Regional
Lower
Officials

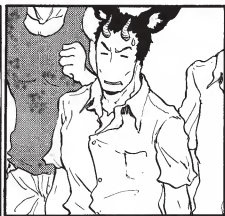
Regional
Middle
Officials

Regional
Upper
Officials

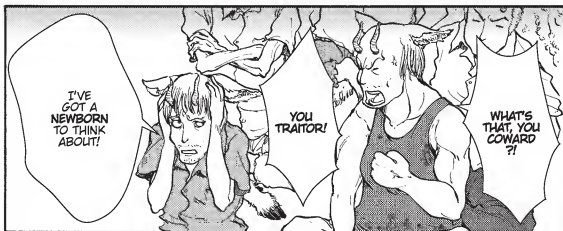
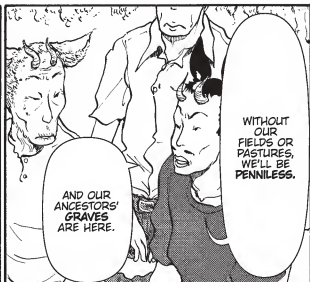
**THAT'S
THE DIVISION
DICTATED
BY THE
RULES!**

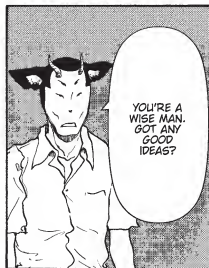
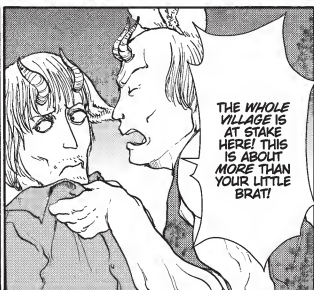
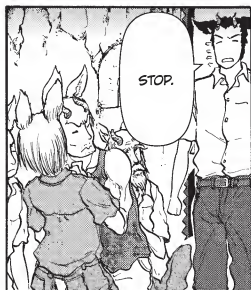


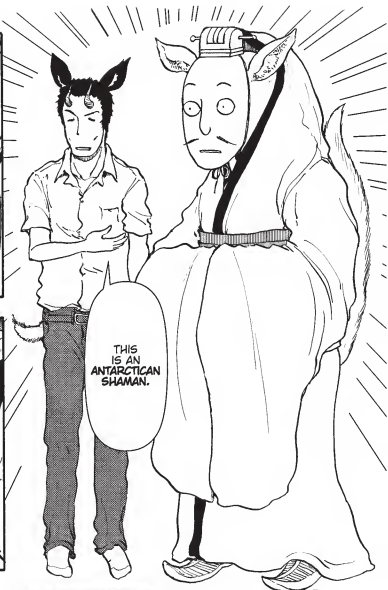
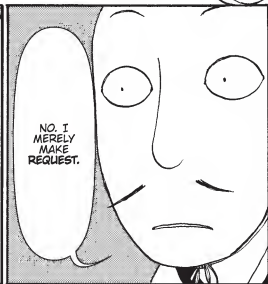
**AS A
SPECIAL
EXCEPTION,
I'LL GIVE
YOU UNTIL
NOON THE
DAY AFTER
TOMORROW.**

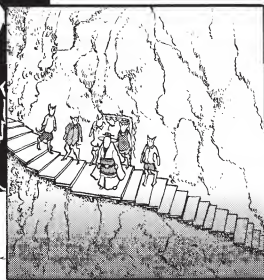
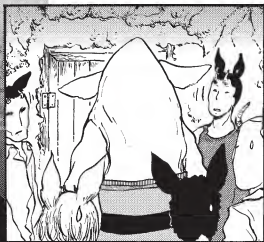


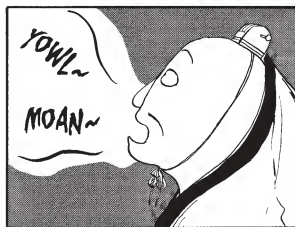


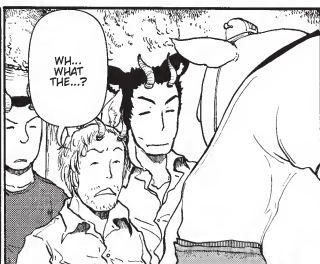
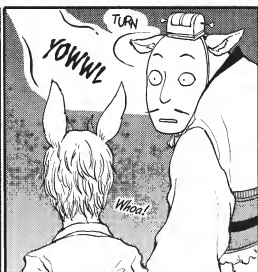


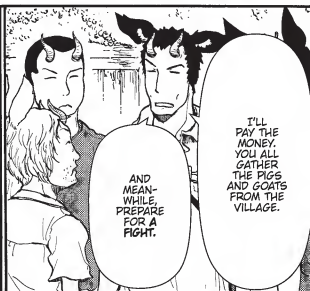


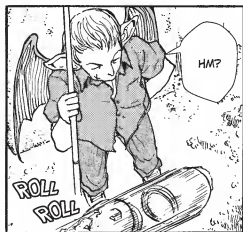


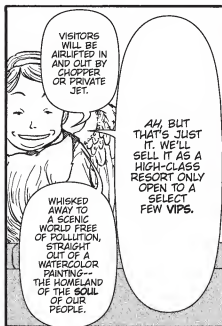
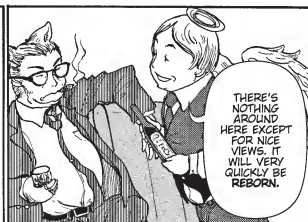
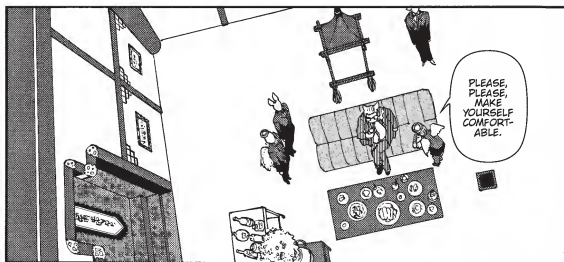


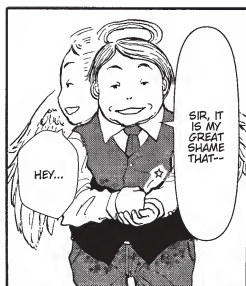








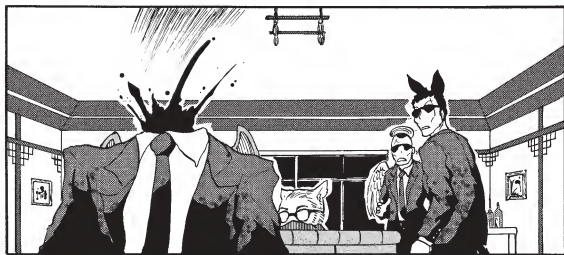
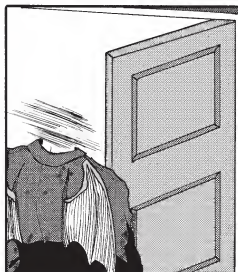


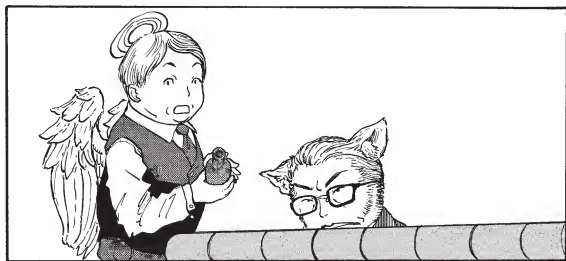


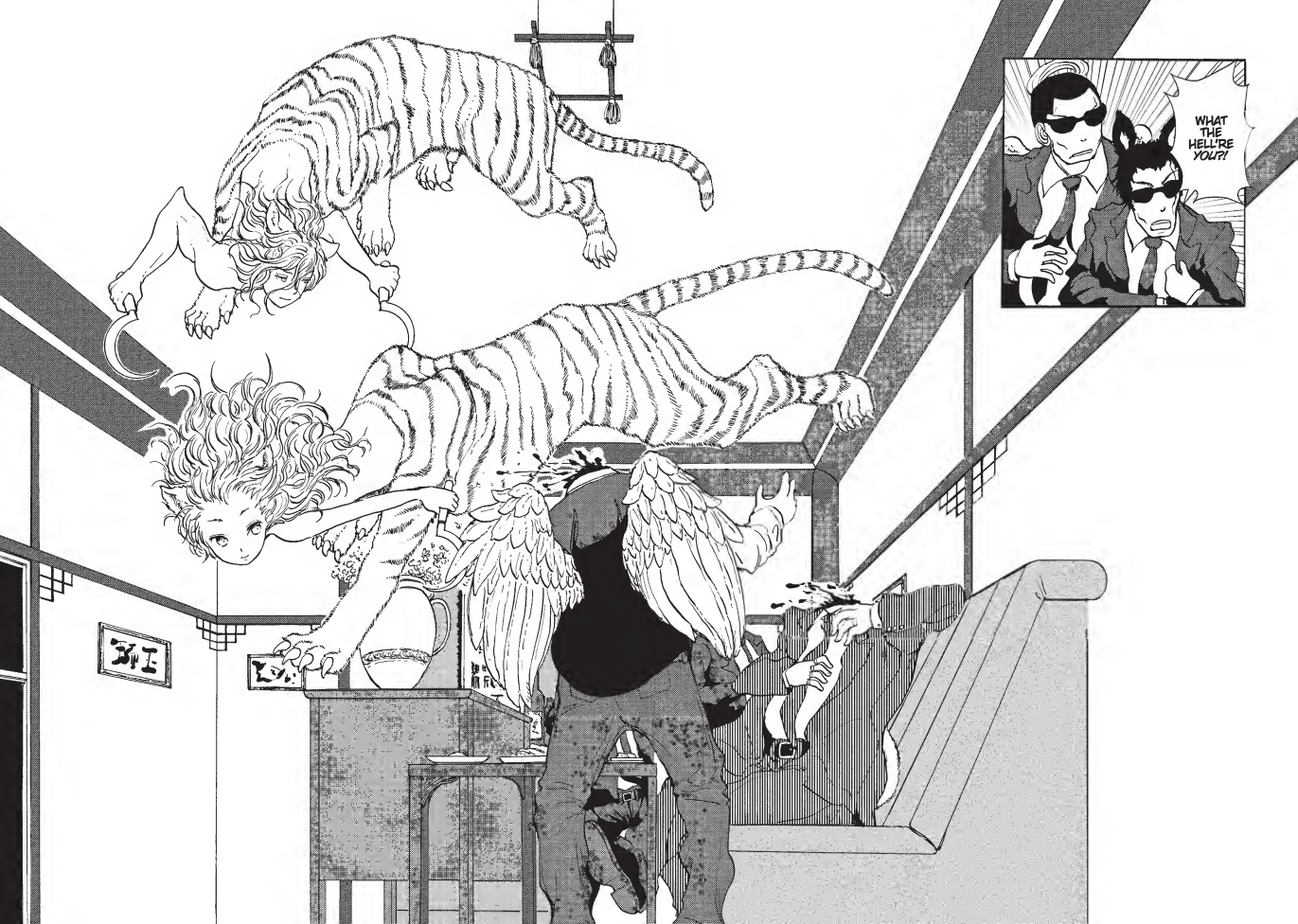
SIR, IT
IS MY GREAT
SHAME
THAT--

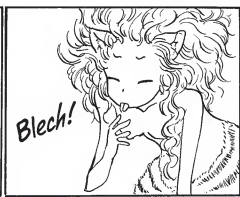
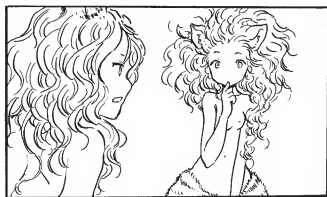
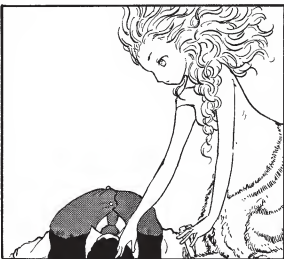
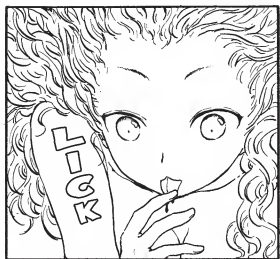
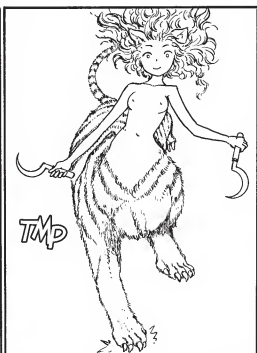
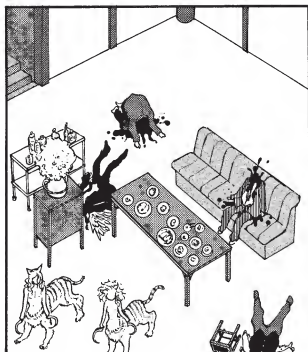


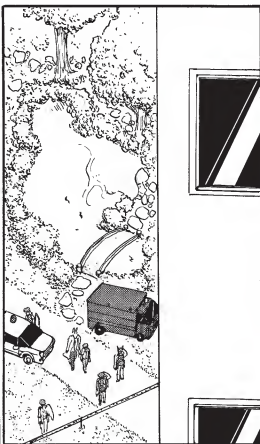
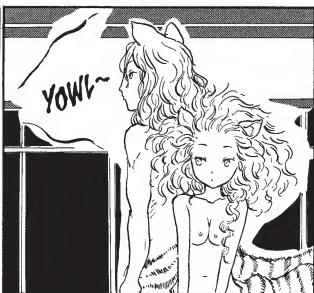
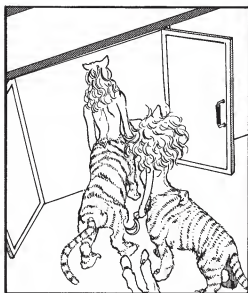
THOUGH,
I MUST
SAY, THIS
PLACE
IS A
LITTLE BIT
FILTHY.

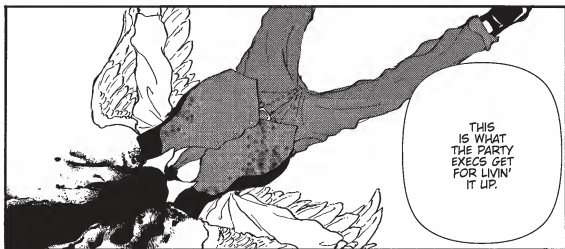


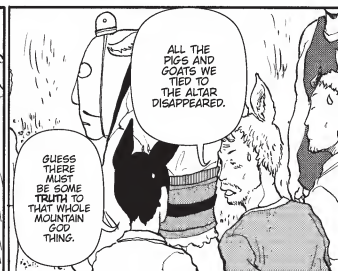
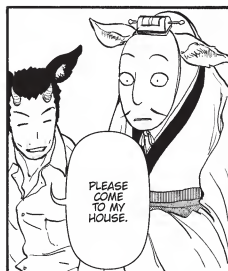
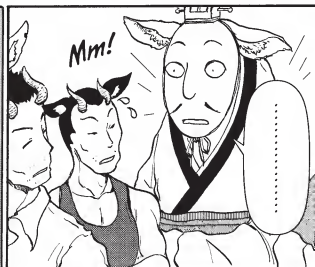


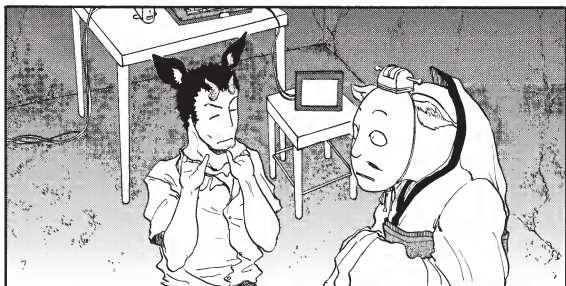












A CentaUr's Life

HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION) FUJIWARA NO MICHINAGA (966-1028)

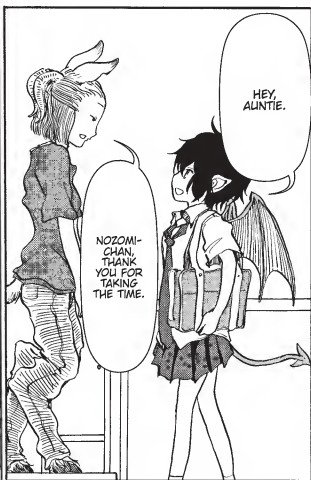
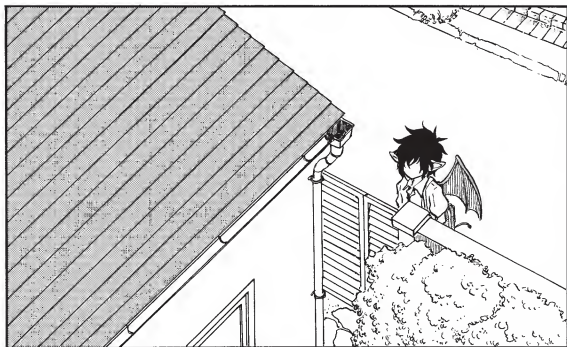
A POWERFUL ARISTOCRAT OF THE HEIAN PERIOD. MAINTAINED STRONG TIES WITH THE EMPEROR'S MATERNAL LINEAGE BY CONTINUALLY SENDING DAUGHTERS OFF TO BE EMPRESS, AND IN SO DOING WAS ABLE TO WIELD GREAT POLITICAL POWER, FIRST FROM THE POSITION OF NAIRAN, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXAMINING DOCUMENTS OF CORRESPONDENCE TO THE EMPEROR, AND EVENTUALLY FROM THE DE FACTO RULING POSITIONS OF UDAIJIN AND SADAIJIN. HIS "FULL MOON POEM" IS WIDELY KNOWN:

*"THIS WORLD, I THINK,
IS INDEED MY WORLD.
LIKE THE FULL MOON I SHINE,
UNCOVERED BY ANY CLOUD"*

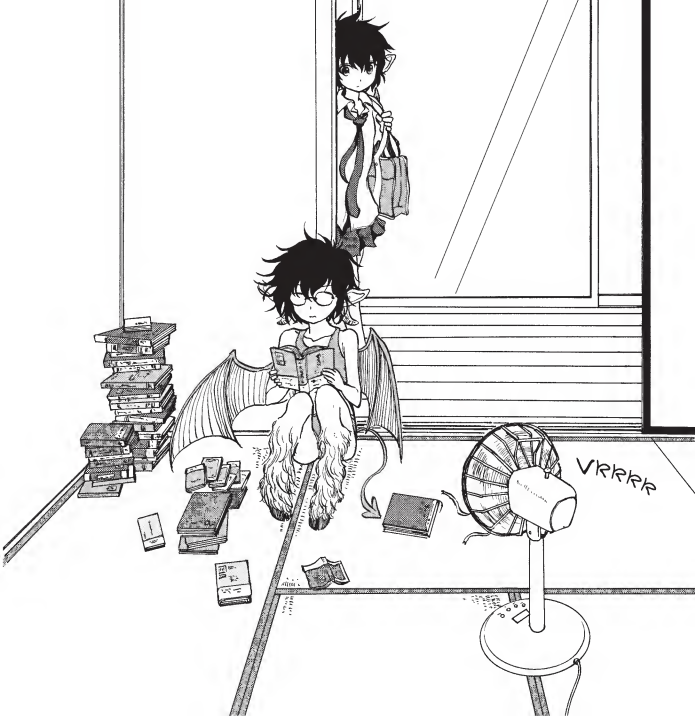
ARISTOCRATS OF THIS ERA OFTEN LEFT DIARIES EXPLAINING THE PROPER PROCEDURE FOR CERTAIN CEREMONIES TO THEIR CHILDREN AND GRAND-CHILDREN, BUT MICHINAGA LEAVES BEHIND WHAT IS THOUGHT TO BE THE OLDEST REMAINING GENUINE DIARY, KNOWN AS MIDO KANPAKUJI. SINCE THE DIARY WAS LIKELY INTENDED FOR PERSONAL MEMOS, IT OFFERS AN UNFILTERED GLIMPSE AT MICHINAGA'S THOUGHTS, AS WELL AS A WINDOW INTO LIFE AT THAT TIME. IT IS AN INVALUABLE HISTORICAL TEXT. INCIDENTALLY, DESPITE THE TITLE OF THE DIARY, MICHINAGA WAS NOT IN FACT APPOINTED TO THE POSITION OF KANPAKU (A CHIEF ADVISOR TO THE EMPEROR).

THE TERM ARISTOCRAT MAY ELICIT IMAGES OF LAVISH LUXURY, BUT LIFE FOR THE HEIAN ARISTOCRAT WAS IN FACT RATHER GRUELING. DAYTIME WAS RESERVED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES WHILE FORMAL BANQUETS WERE HELD AT NIGHT. THEY WERE ALSO REQUIRED TO MAKE FREQUENT APPEARANCES AT LITERARY SALONS. ON THAT NOTE, IT BEARS MENTIONING THAT MICHINAGA WAS A CONTEMPORARY OF MURASAKI SHIKIBU, AND IS SAID TO HAVE PROVIDED ONE OF THE MODELS FOR HER TALE OF GENJI, AND WAS EVEN THE FIRST PERSON TO READ IT.





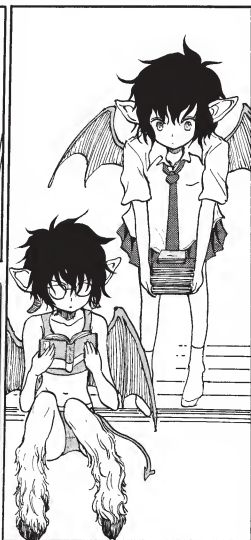
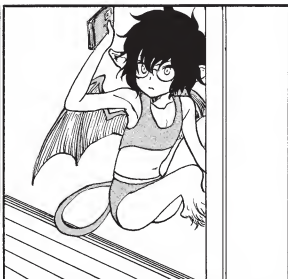
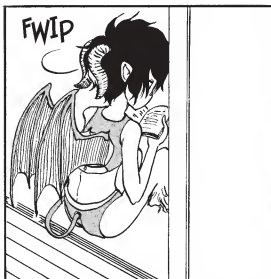
CHAPTER 40

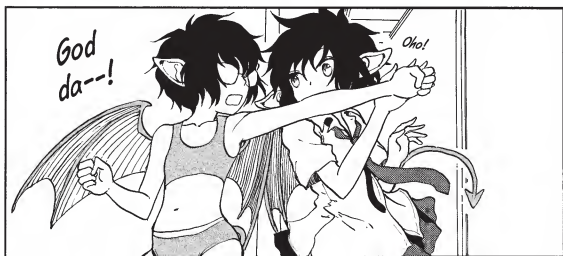
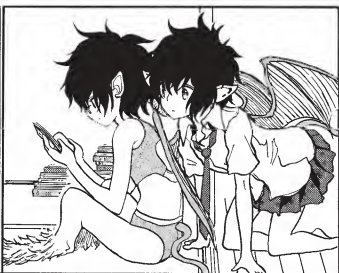


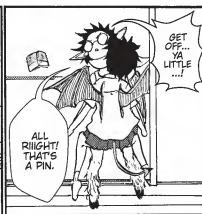
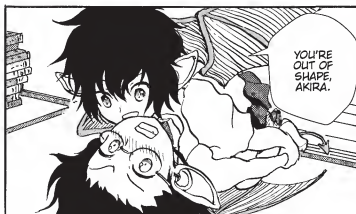
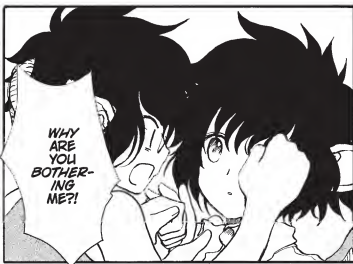


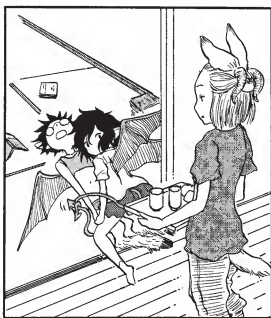
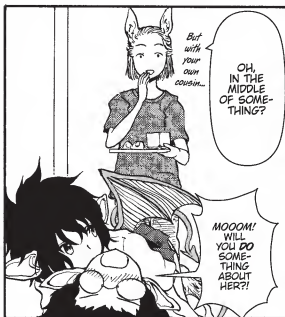
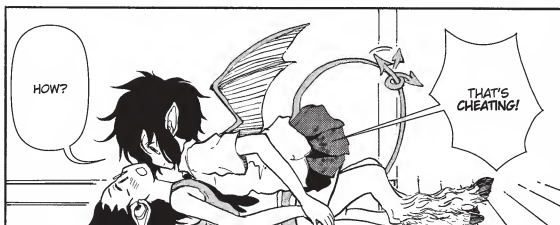
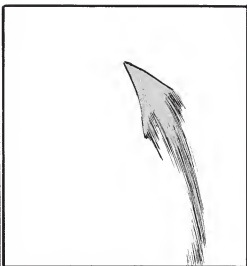
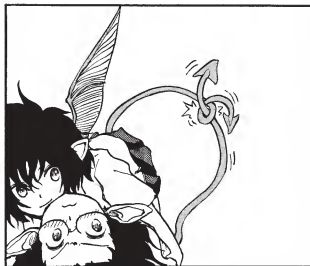


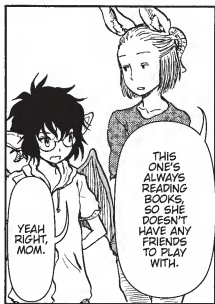
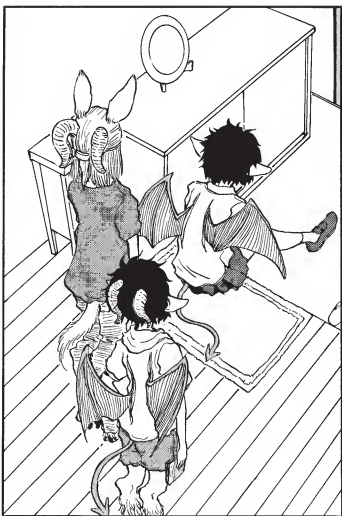


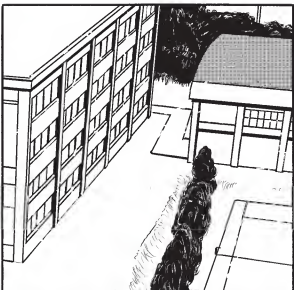


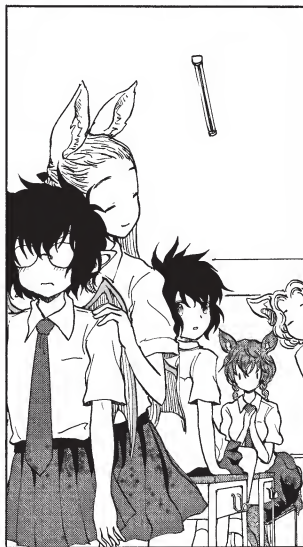












A CentaUr's Life

HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION) KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE (?-1336)

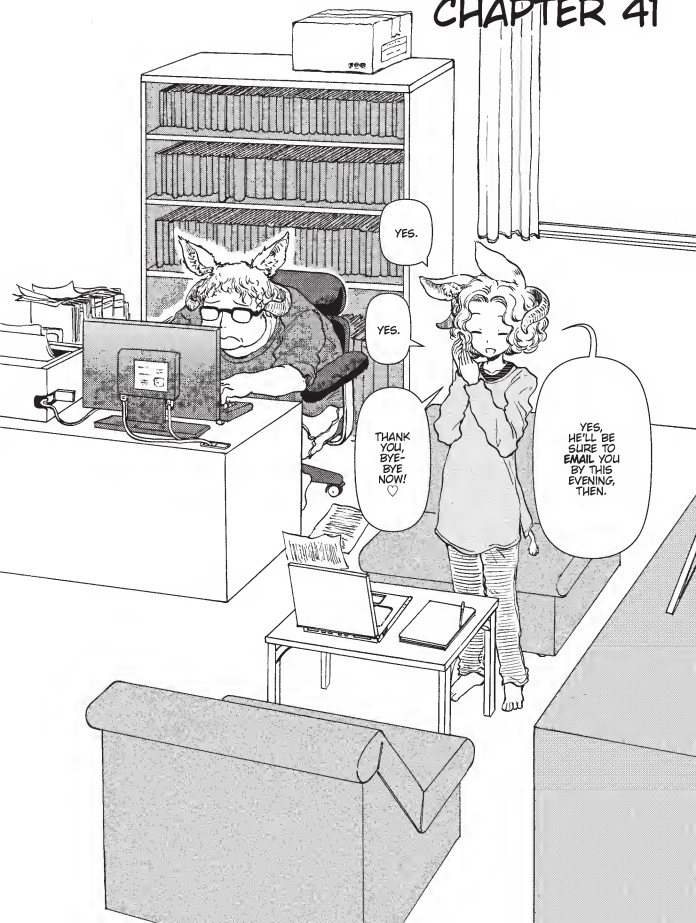
A GENERAL OF THE SOUTHERN IMPERIAL COURT DURING THE NANBOKU-CHO PERIOD ("SOUTH AND NORTH COURTS PERIOD") AT THE TAIL END OF THE KAMIKURA PERIOD. HAILED AS A HERO PRIOR TO WWII AS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF SAMURAI LOYALTY TO THE EMPEROR GO-DAIGO, AND AGAIN IN THE POST-WAR ERA AS A REVOLUTIONARY HERO OF CLASS STRUGGLE. AS A NON-GOKENIN, HE FELL OUTSIDE THE COMMAND OF THE KAMIKURA BAKUFU, AND LITTLE IS KNOWN OF THE EARLIER HALF OF HIS LIFE, BUT GIVEN THAT HE IS REFERRED TO AS AN AKUTO (WRONG-DOER) IN WHAT FEW HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS EXIST, IT CAN BE SURMISED THAT HE LIKELY TOOK PART IN VARIOUS SHOEN CONFLICTS. IT CAN ALSO BE SURMISED FROM THE FACT THAT THE TITLE OF HYOE NO JO (LIEUTENANT OF THE MIDDLE PALACE GUARD) IS LISTED ALONGSIDE HIS NAME, THAT HE MAY HAVE HAD TIES WITH THE IMPERIAL COURT AND THUS EMPEROR GO-DAIGO BEFORE THE FALL OF THE BAKUFU.

DURING THIS PERIOD, THE KAMIKURA BAKUFU HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF A MONGOL INVASION IN ORDER TO SECURE COMMAND OVER THE PREVIOUSLY UNCONTROLLED SAMURAI OF THE WESTERN PROVINCE, PLACING DOMINANCE OVER ALL OF JAPAN WITHIN THEIR GRASP. THE TOKUSO FAMILY, WHICH WAS THE DIRECT LINE OF REGENCY IN THE HOJO CLAN AND THE PRIMARY HOLDER OF POWER WITHIN THE KAMIKURA BAKUFU, HAD ALSO SECURED FORCES IN EVERY REGION. PLACED IN OBVIOUSLY DISADVANTAGEOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE NEVERTHELESS TOOK TO ARMS. PURSUED BY THE BAKUFU'S MASSIVE ARMY, MASASHIGE LED A CUNNING DEFENSE OF CASTLES AT CHIHAYA AND AKASAKA, CONTRIBUTING GREATLY IN TIME TO THE ULTIMATE DOWNFALL OF THE KAMIKURA. HOWEVER, BAD BLOOD BETWEEN THE EMPEROR GO-DAIGO AND ONE PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE ANTI-SHOGUNATE FORCE, ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI, LED TO A WAR BETWEEN THE TWO, AND MASASHIGE WAS FINALLY KILLED IN BATTLE AT MINATOGAWA.





CHAPTER 41

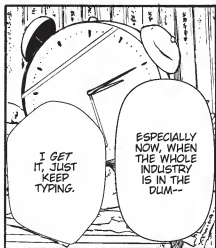
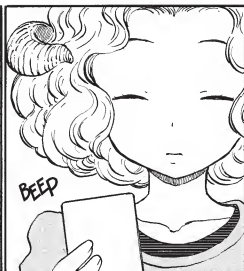
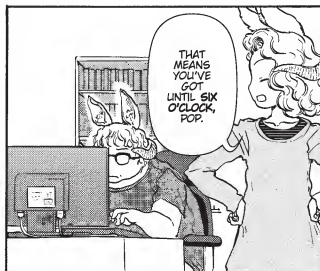


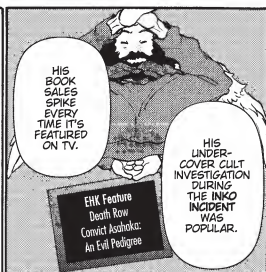
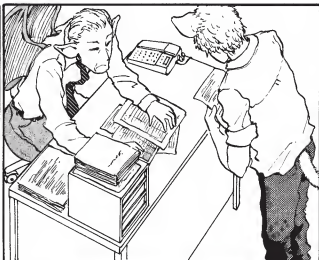
YES.

YES.

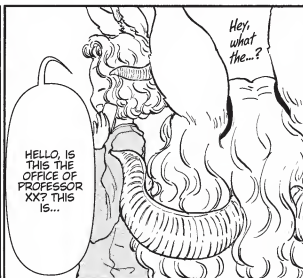
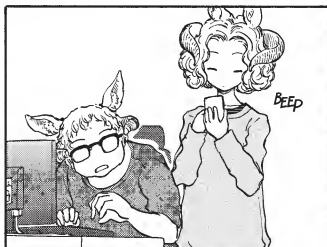
THANK
YOU,
BYE-
BYE
NOW!
♡

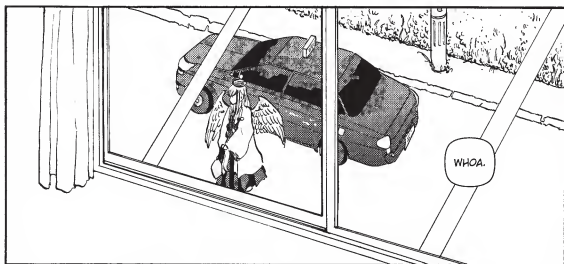
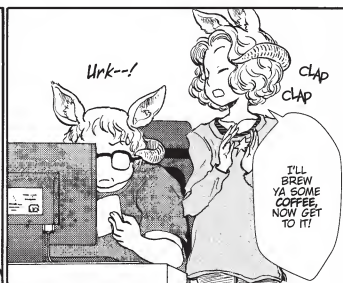
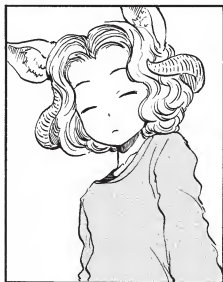
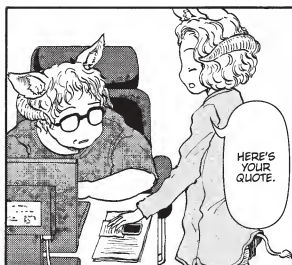
YES,
HE'LL BE
SURE TO
EMAIL YOU
BY THIS
EVENING,
THEN.

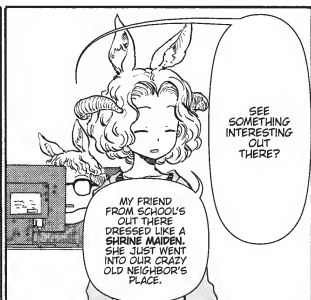
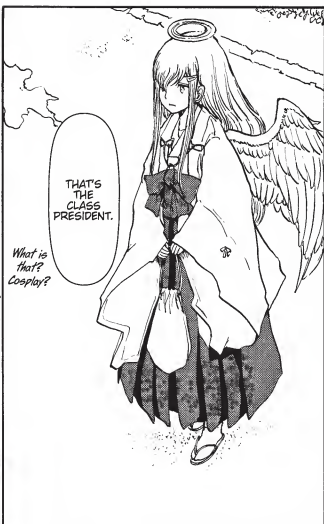
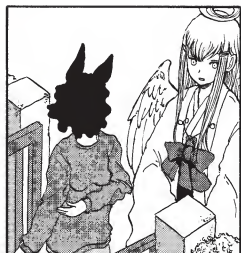




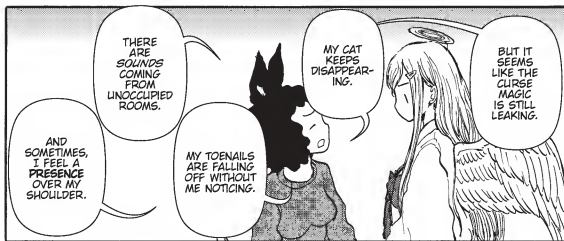
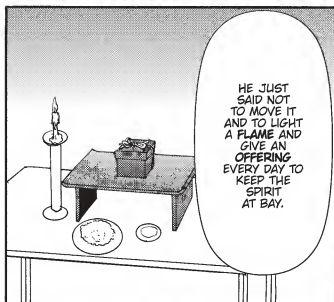
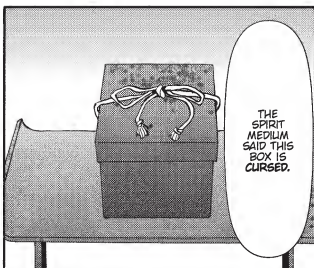


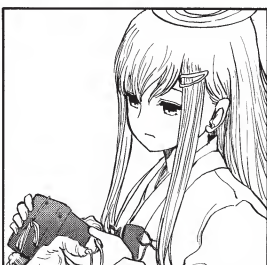


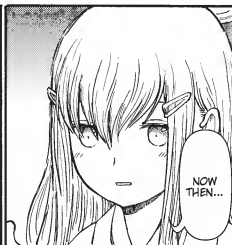
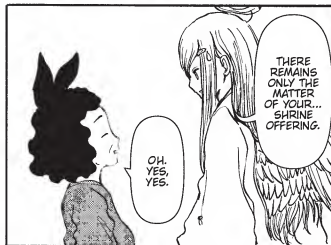
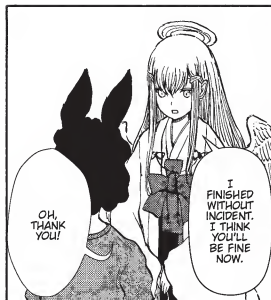


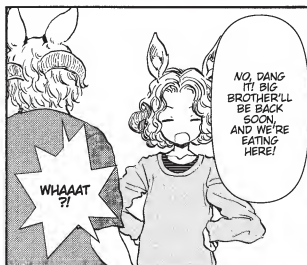


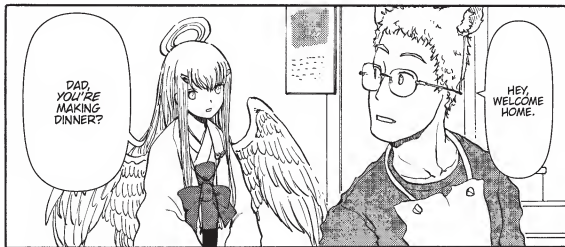
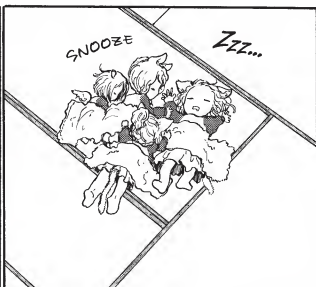
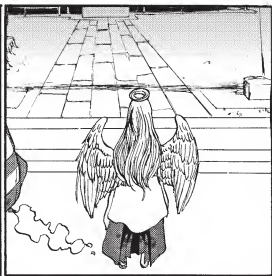


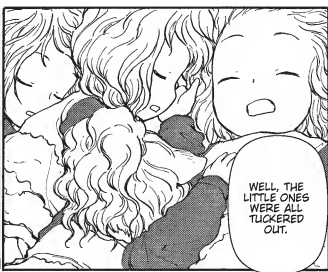






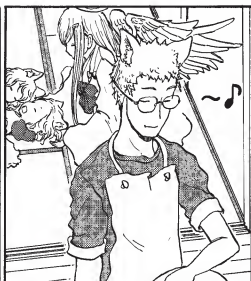








I DON'T
KNOW
ANYTHING
ABOUT
ART
BEYOND
WHAT I'VE
LEARNED
IN TEXT-BOOKS...

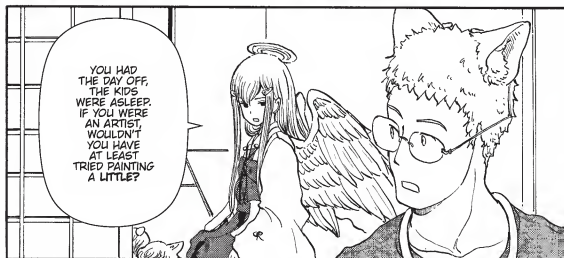


IT'S NOT
ABOUT
WHETHER
YOU CAN
EAT OR
NOT.

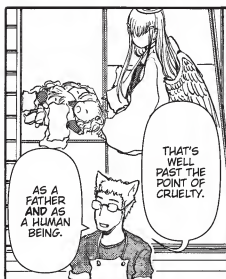


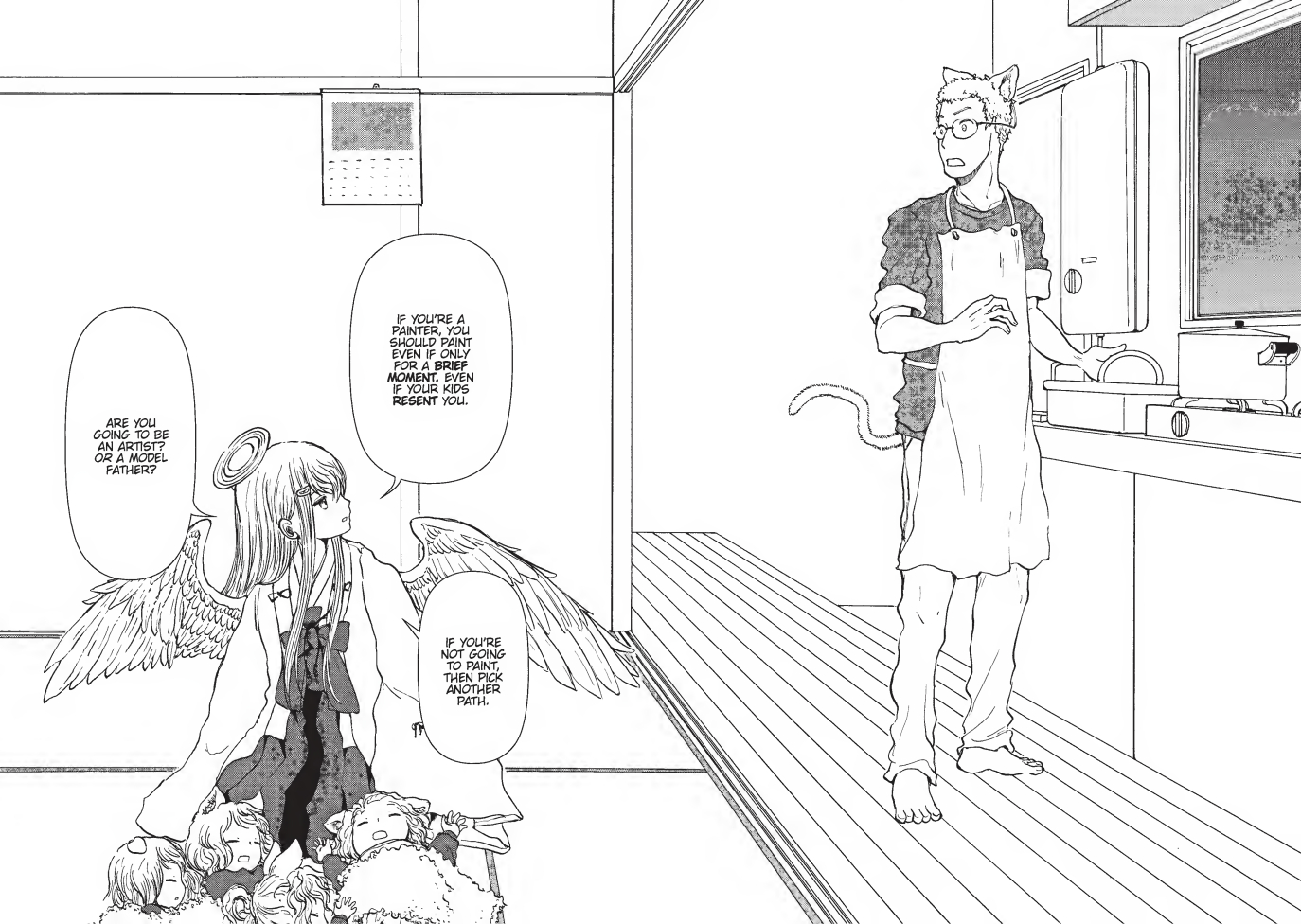
IT'S NOT
LIKE MY
PICTURES
ARE WHAT'S
KEEPING
FOOD ON
THE TABLE.

WELL,
JEEZ,
MAKE
ME
FEEL
BAD,
WHY
DON'T
YOU.



YOU HAD
THE DAY OFF,
THE KIDS
WERE ASLEEP.
IF YOU WERE
AN ARTIST,
WOULDN'T
YOU HAVE
AT LEAST
TRIED
PAINTING
A LITTLE?

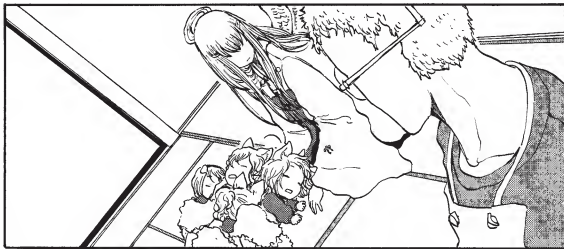
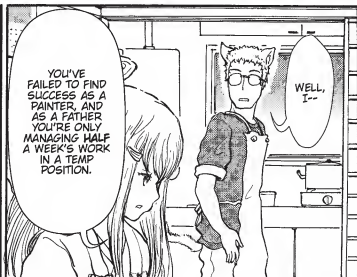
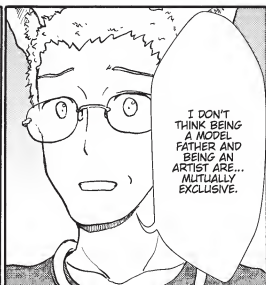


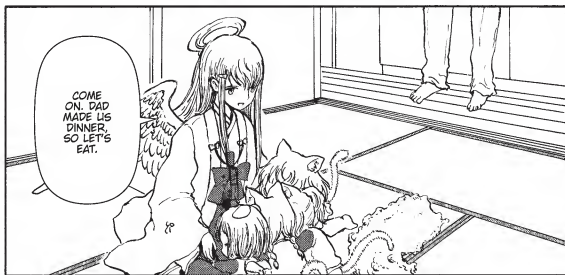
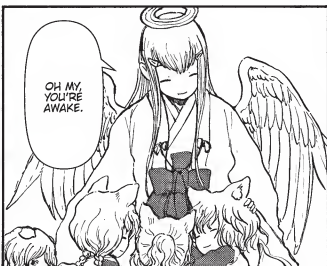


ARE YOU
GOING TO BE
AN ARTIST?
OR A MODEL
FATHER?

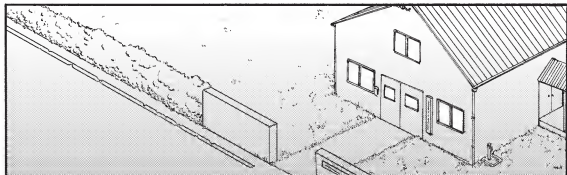
IF YOU'RE A
PAINTER, YOU
SHOULD PAINT
EVEN IF ONLY
FOR A BRIEF
MOMENT, EVEN
IF YOUR KIDS
RESENT YOU.

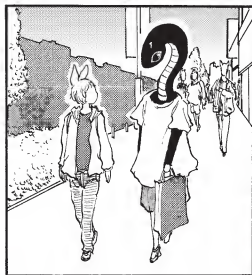
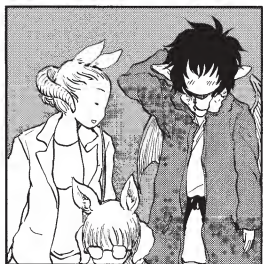
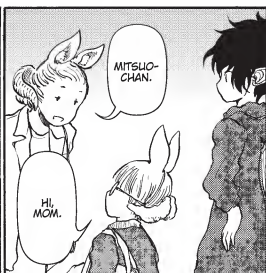
IF YOU'RE
NOT GOING
TO PAINT,
THEN PICK
ANOTHER
PATH.











A CentaUr's Life

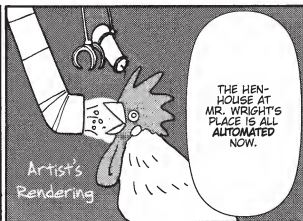
HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION) HOSOKAWA MASAMOTO (1466-1507)

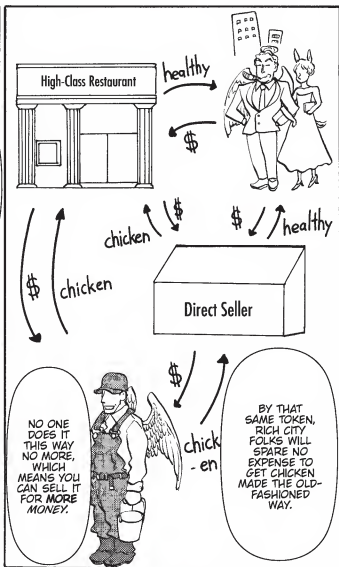
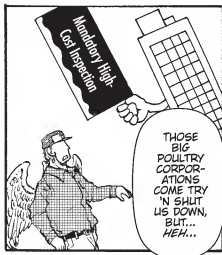
A SHOGUN OF THE MUROMACHI PERIOD, AND HEAD OF THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE HOSOKAWA HOUSE, ONE OF THE THREE *KANREI* HOUSES WHICH OVERSAW THE BAKUFU ADMINISTRATION. SON OF HOSOKAWA KATSUMOTO, COMMANDER OF THE EASTERN ARMY DURING THE ONIN WAR, MASAMOTO WAS ABLE TO GRASP SUPREME POWER WITHIN THE BAKUFU BY EXILING THE YOUNG SHOGUN ASHIKAGA YOSHIKI (LATER KNOWN AS ASHIKAGA YOSHITANE) IN THE COUP OF MEIO, AND APPOINTING ASHIKAGA YOSHITAKA AS SHOGUN. BY FURTHER SUPPRESSING THE FLEEING SUPPORTERS OF YOSHIKI, THE HOSOKAWA FAMILY WAS ABLE TO CONQUER A MASSIVE TERRITORY. MASAMOTO, HOWEVER, A KNOWN SORCERER, TOOK NO INTEREST IN WOMEN EVEN AT AGE FORTY, AND BECAME ABSORBED IN THE MYSTIC BUDDHIST PRACTICE OF *SHUGENDO*. THE CHILDLESS MASAMOTO ADOPTED THREE CHILDREN, A DECISION THAT, ALONG WITH HIS PROCLIVITY FOR SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCES, WOULD SPELL HIS DEMISE. MASAMOTO WAS ASSASSINATED IN THE ENSUING CONFLICT OVER WHO WOULD BE SUCCESSOR. HIS SORCERY OFFERED NO PRACTICAL AID. FOLLOWING HIS DEATH, THE HOUSE QUICKLY FELL AFTER EXTENSIVE INFIGHTING.

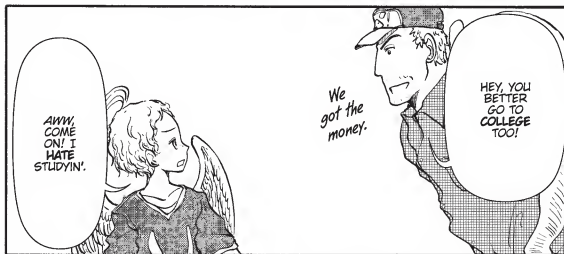


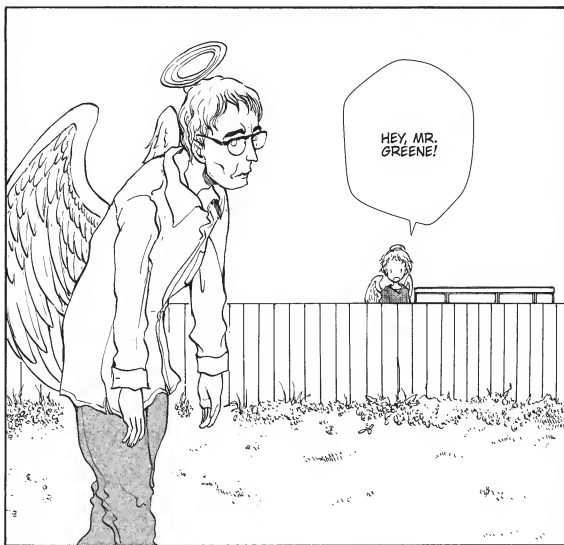
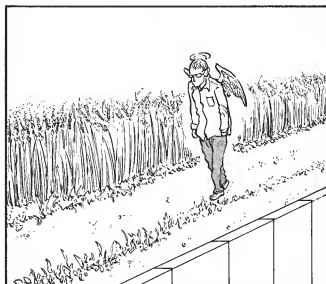
CHAPTER 42

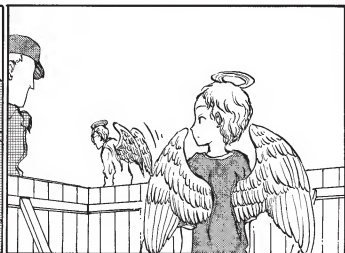


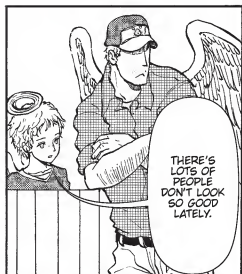










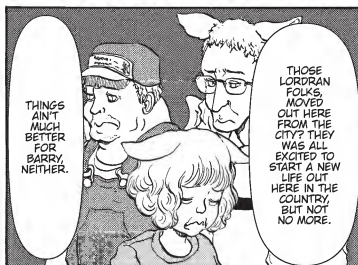


THERE'S LOTS OF PEOPLE DON'T LOOK SO GOOD LATELY.



BUT THAT WAS ONLY IN THE BEGINNIN'.

THEY SAID YOU'D TAKE IN TWICE THE CROP WITHOUT EVEN HAVIN' TO USE PESTICIDES.

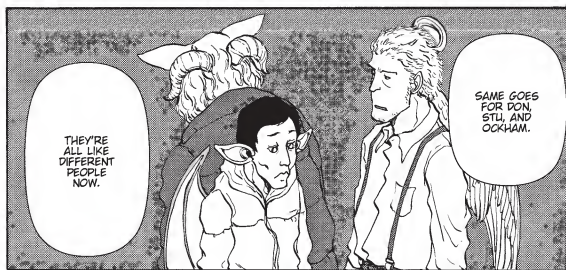


THINGS AIN'T MUCH BETTER FOR BARRY, NEITHER.

THOSE LORDRAN FOLKS, MOVED OUT HERE FROM THE CITY? THEY WAS ALL EXCITED TO START A NEW LIFE OUT HERE IN THE COUNTRY, BUT NOT NO MORE.

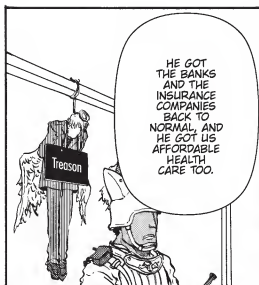


WELP, SHIT ECONOMY SURE AIN'T HELPIN'.



THEY'RE ALL LIKE DIFFERENT PEOPLE NOW.

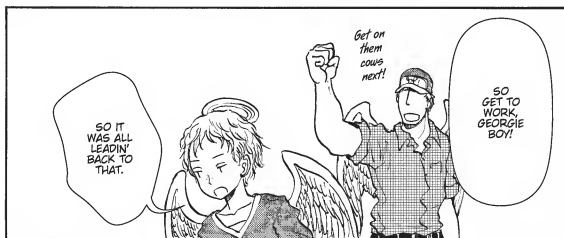
SAME GOES FOR DON, STU, AND OCKHAM.

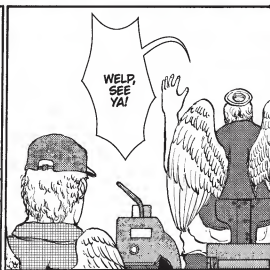
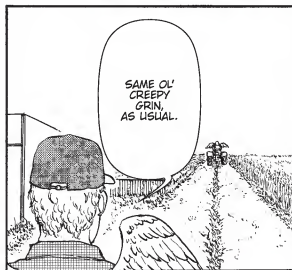
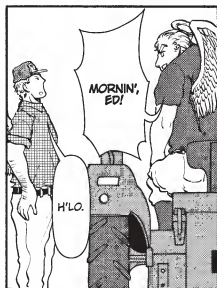
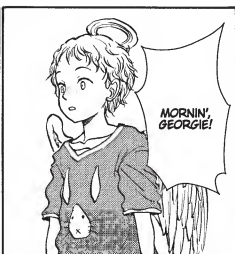
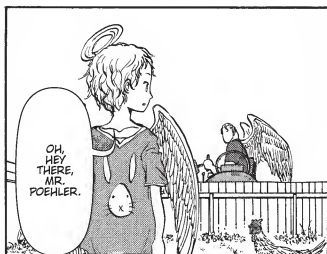


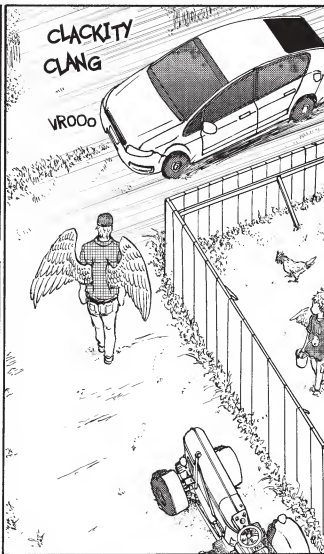
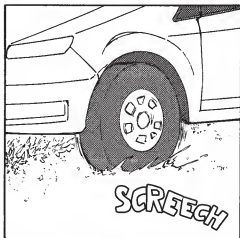
HE GOT
THE BANKS
AND THE
INSURANCE
COMPANIES
BACK TO
NORMAL, AND
HE GOT US
AFFORDABLE
HEALTH
CARE TOO.

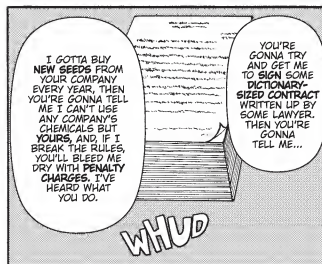
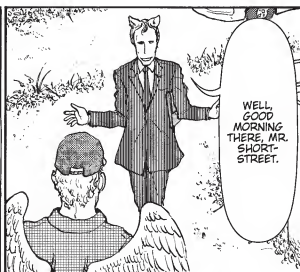


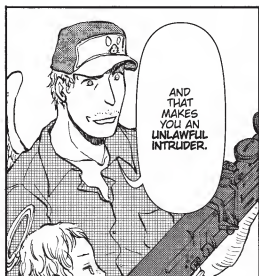
ANY
CASE,
WHEN IT
COMES TO
FARMIN',
THE OLD
WAYS
ARE STILL
THE BEST
WAYS.











AND
THAT
MAKES
YOU AN
UNLAWFUL
INTRUDER.



JUST SO
Y'KNOW?
THAT SPOT
YOU'RE
STANDING
ON RIGHT
NOW IS
PRIVATE
PROPERTY.

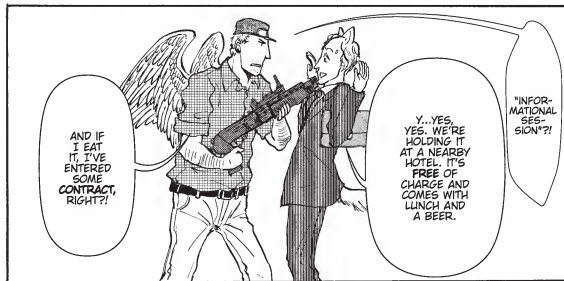
Everyone just
passes on
through, but
this is a
private drive.
(vvvv)



PLEASE,
WON'T YOU
AT LEAST
COME TO OUR
INFORMATIONAL
SESSION?



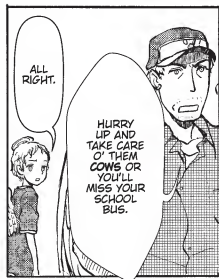
NOW,
NOW,
I'M NOT
TRYING
TO FORCE
YOU TO
DO ANY-
THING...

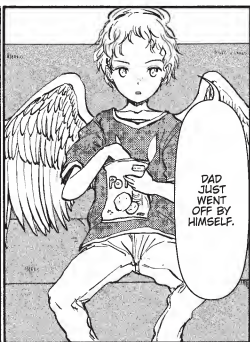
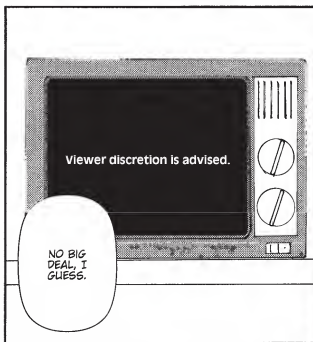
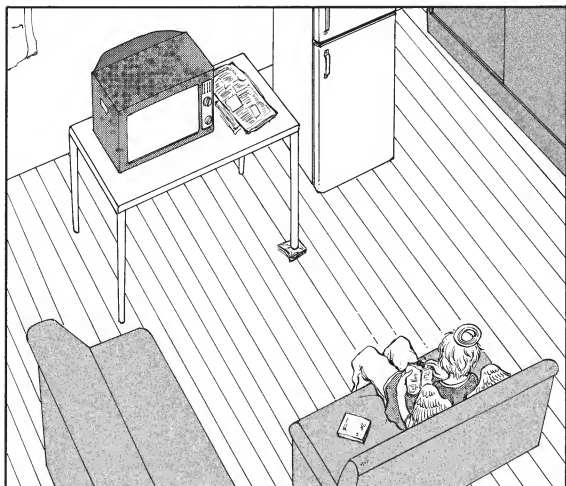


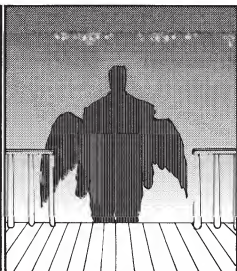
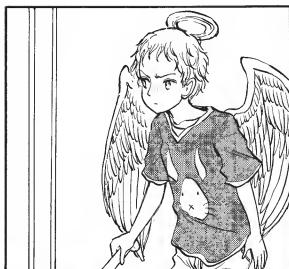
AND IF
I EAT
IT, I'VE
ENTERED
SOME
CONTRACT,
RIGHT?!

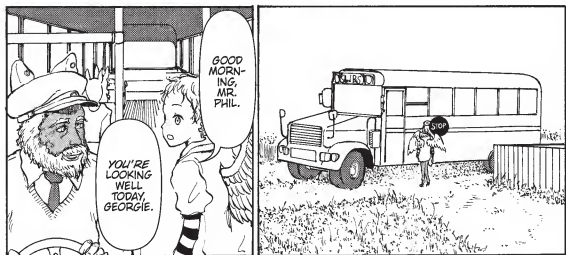
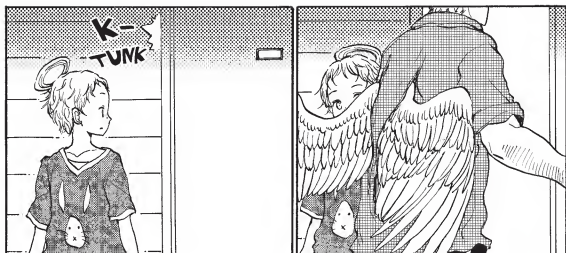
Y...YES.
YES. WE'RE
HOLDING IT
AT A NEARBY
HOTEL. IT'S
FREE OF
CHARGE AND
COMES WITH
LUNCH AND
A BEER.

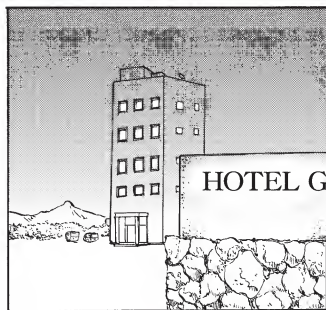
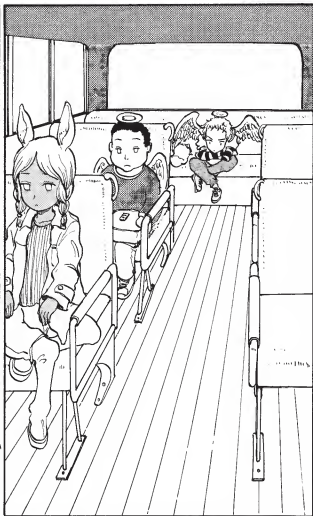
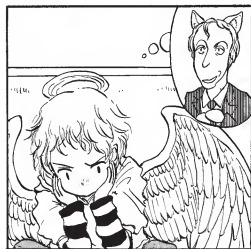
"INFOR-
MATIONAL
SES-
SION"?!

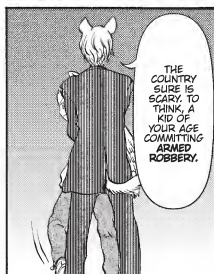
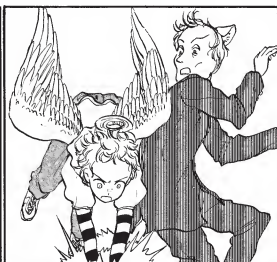
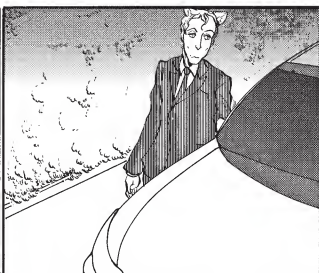












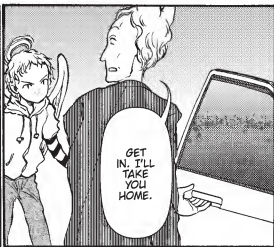
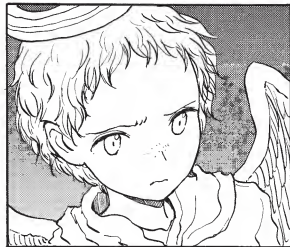
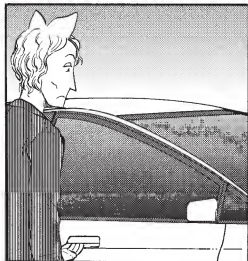
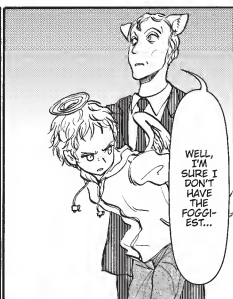
THE
COUNTRY
SURE IS
SCARY. TO
THINK, A
KID OF
YOUR AGE
COMMITTING
ARMED
ROBBERY.

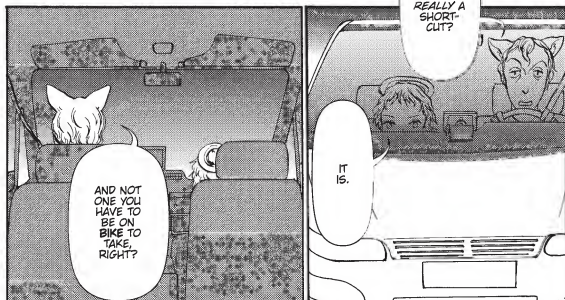
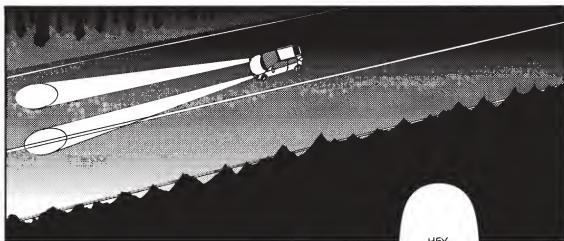
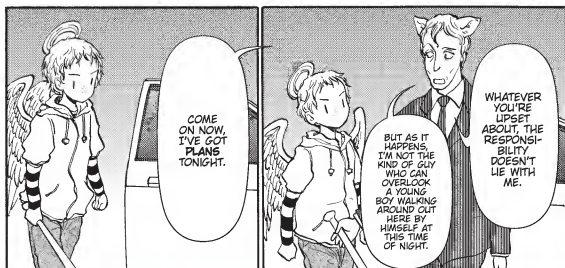


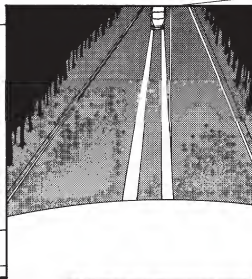
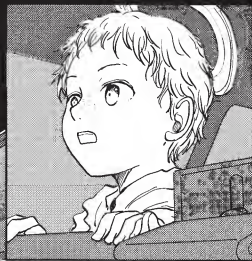
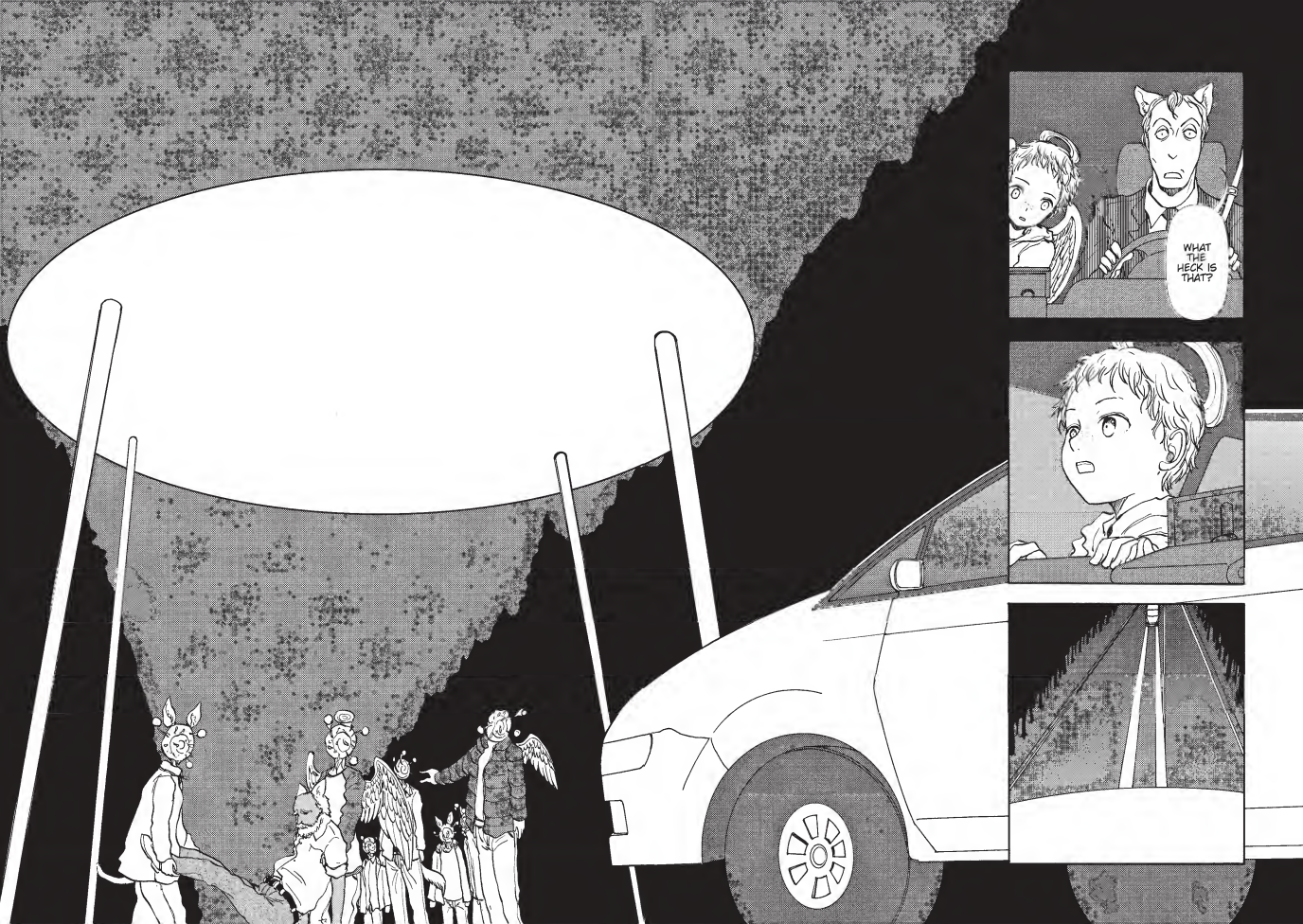
OWW!
GET OFF
ME!

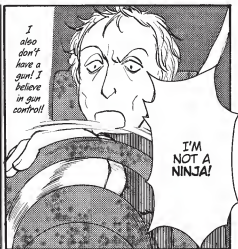
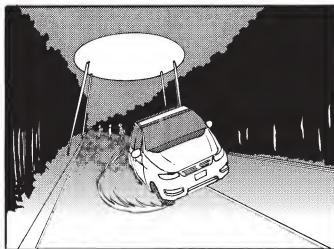
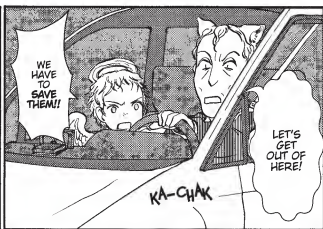
I MAY
NOT LOOK
IT, BUT
I'VE GOT
A BLACK
BELT IN
JIU-JITSU.

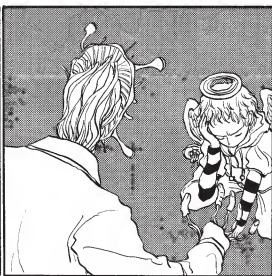
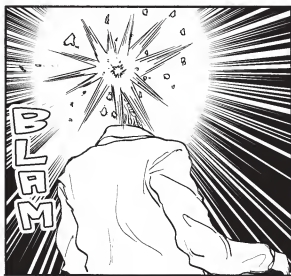
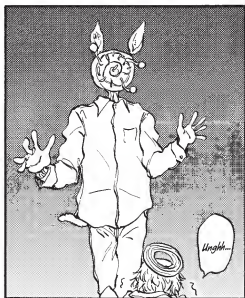
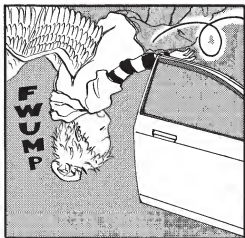


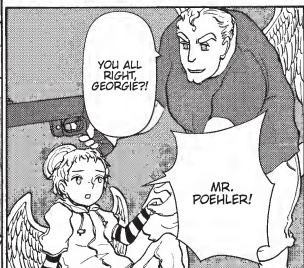
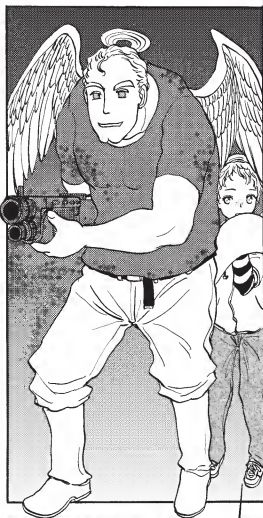


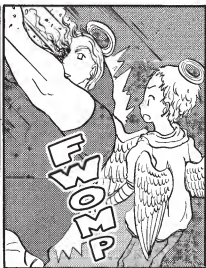
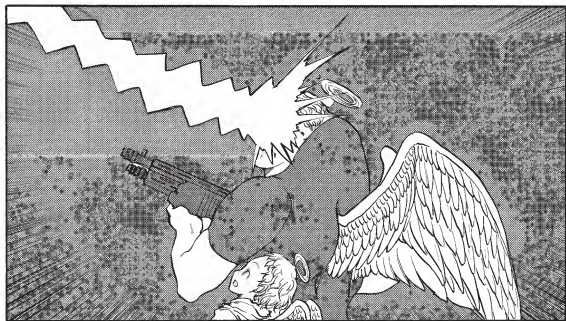


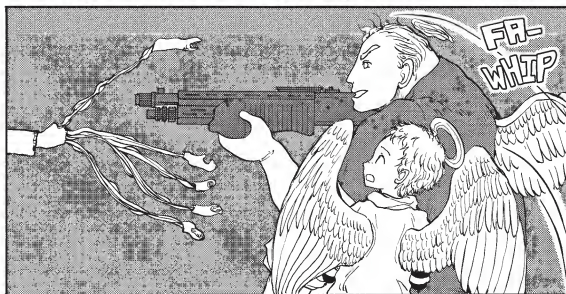
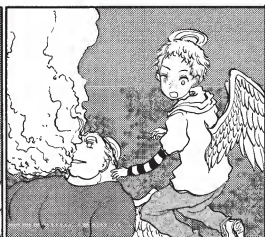
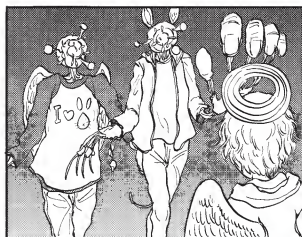




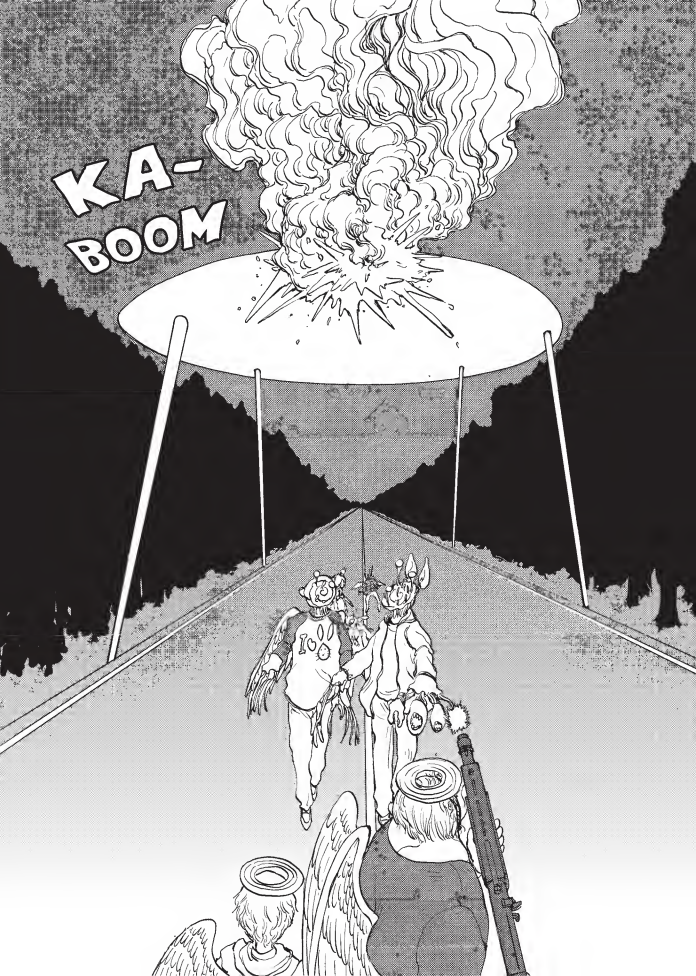


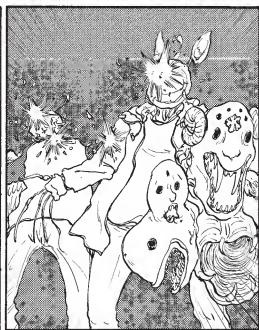
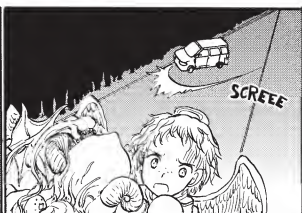
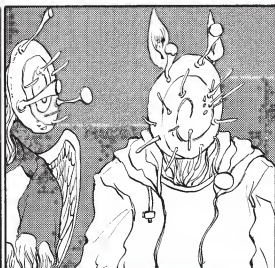


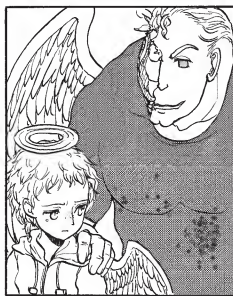
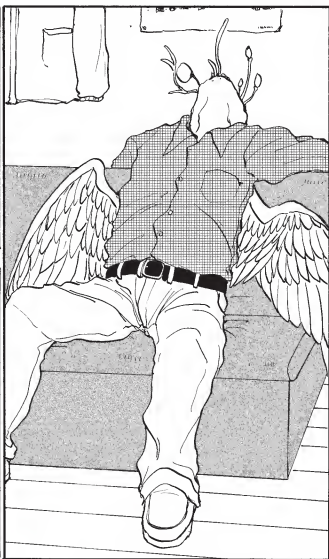
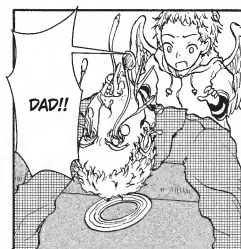
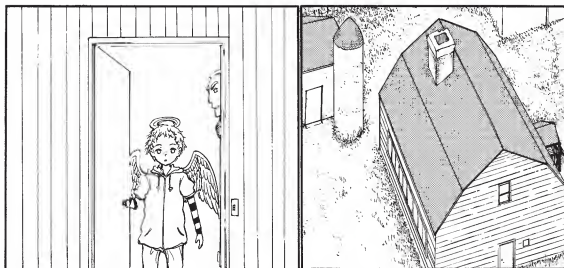


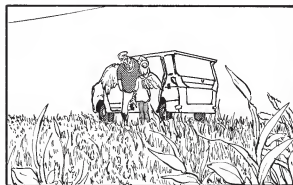
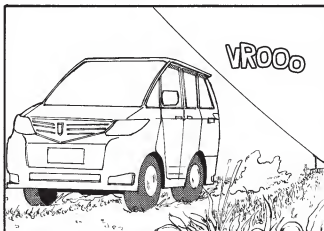
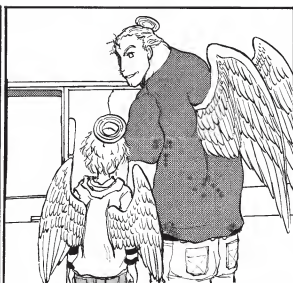
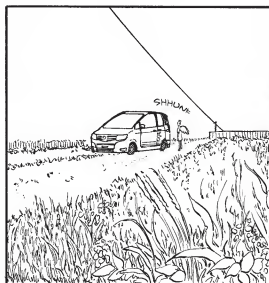


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A CentaUr's Life

HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION)

TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI

(?-1598)

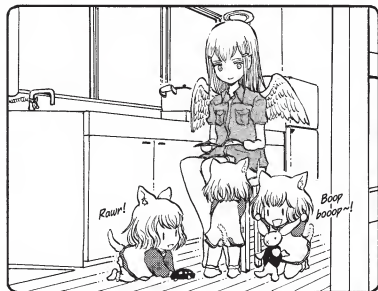
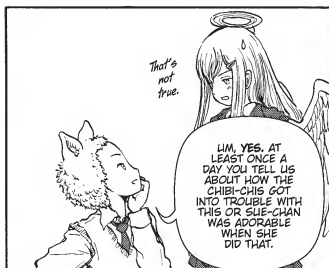
A SAMURAI GENERAL OF THE WARRING STATES (SENGOKU) PERIOD. AMONG MANY OTHER THEORIES, IT IS SPECULATED THAT HE WAS BORN THE SON OF A PEASANT FOOT SOLDIER, BUT WHATEVER THE CASE, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE CAME FROM A LOW-CLASS BACKGROUND. HOWEVER, CONTRARY TO THE IMPRESSION THAT WOULD DEVELOP OVER THE COMING CENTURIES THAT SOLDIERS WERE TYPICALLY CENTAURS, IT WAS IN FACT NOT UNCOMMON FOR DRACONIDS TO BECOME DAMYO. FIRST DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF UNDER THE ODA CLAN, HE IS WELL KNOWN FOR AT LAST UNIFYING JAPAN AFTER THE DEATH OF NOBUNAGA. HE IS ALSO WELL KNOWN FOR THE POEM, "IF THE CUCKOO DOES NOT SING, COAX IT" (LIKELY DEVISED AFTER HIS LIFETIME), BUT IN REALITY HIS PERSONALITY WAS LIKELY BETTER ENCAPSULATED WITH THE POEM ASCRIBED TO NOBUNAGA: "IF THE CUCKOO DOES NOT SING, KILL IT." SOFTENING THIS SEEMINGLY BRUTAL IMAGE, HOWEVER, WAS HIS DEEP PASSION FOR CULTURE. HIDEYOSHI WAS AN AVID LOVER OF NOH THEATER, A DISCERNING CONNOISSEUR OF TEAS, A SKILLED WRITER AND MUSICIAN, AND A SPLENDID GO PLAYER. WHILE THIS MAY HAVE BEEN IN PART A COMPENSATION FOR HIS OWN CRUDE BACKGROUND, HE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE HAD AN INNATE KNACK FOR THESE THINGS. LIKEWISE ON THE BATTLEFIELD, HE WAS A SKILLED TACTICIAN KNOWN FOR OVERWHELMING THE ENEMY WITH INCREDIBLE WEALTH AND SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY, SUGGESTING DEEP TIES WITH COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL MERCHANTS, BUT DUE TO THE SCARCITY OF DOCUMENTS FROM THE ODA-TOYOTOMI GOVERNMENT, LITTLE CAN BE SAID FOR CERTAIN. HE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE HAD SIX FINGERS ON HIS RIGHT HAND AND TWO TAILS.

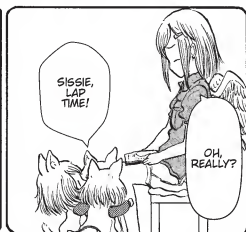
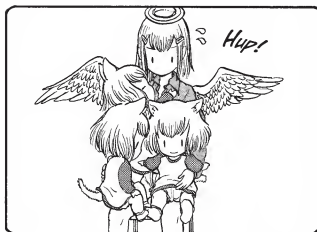
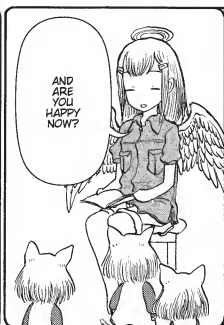
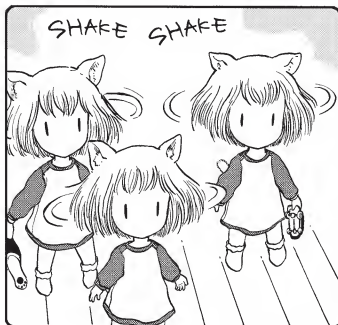


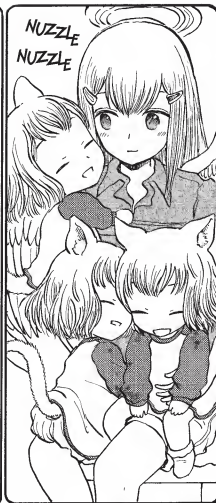
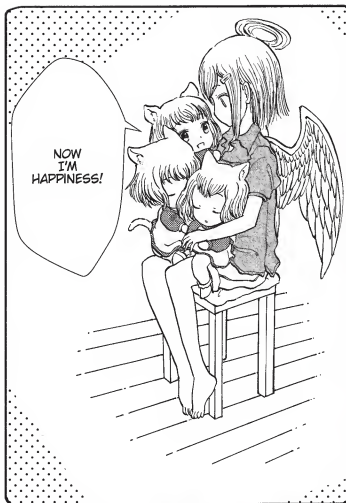


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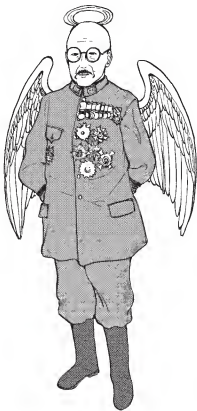


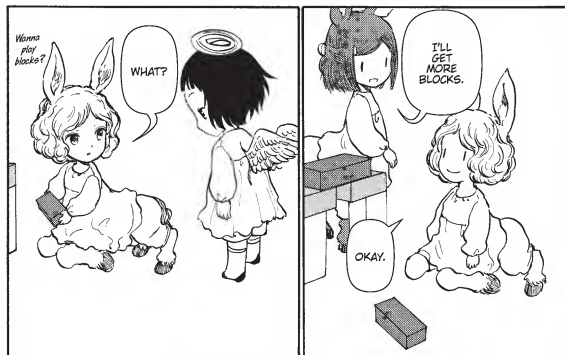
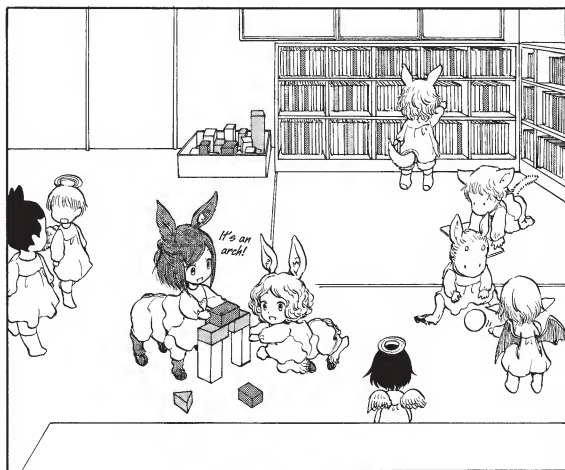


A CentaUr's Life

HISTORICAL FIGURES (JAPAN EDITION) TOJO HIDEKI (1884-1948)

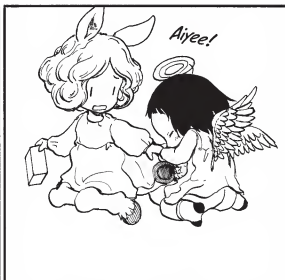
A SHOWA-ERA ARMY GENERAL AND POLITICIAN. AFTER SERVING IN THE KANTO ARMY, HE ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF CHIEF OF STAFF AND VICE WAR MINISTER, FINALLY BECOMING PRIME MINISTER AND LEADING JAPAN INTO THE PACIFIC WAR. HE HAS BEEN WIDELY PRAISED AND CRITICIZED, BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS: A HARDWORKING MAN, HE PLACED TOO LITTLE VALUE ON ANYTHING OTHER THAN HARD WORK; THOUGH COMPASSIONATE TOWARD THOSE BENEATH HIM, HE WAS CRUEL TO THOSE NOT ON HIS SIDE; THOUGH HE WAS GOOD-NATURED AT HEART, HE MADE LIBERAL USE OF THE MILITARY POLICE; THOUGH SKILLED, CAUTIOUS, ORDERLY, AND AS PURE "AS A GIRLS' SCHOOL HEADMASTER," HE LACKED THE PERSPECTIVE OR BROAD VISION FITTING OF A POLITICIAN.

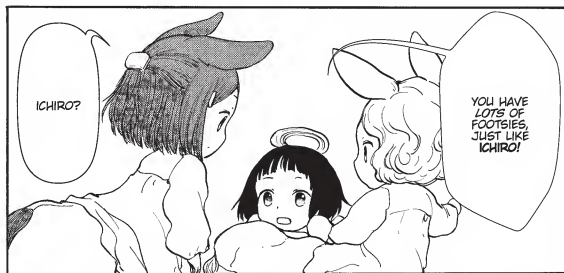
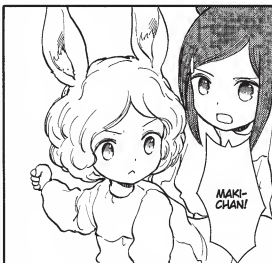
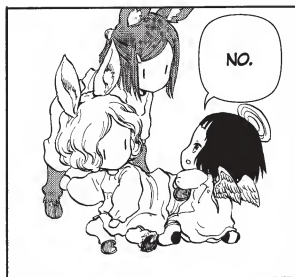


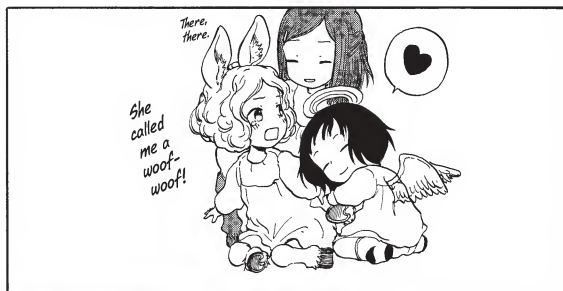
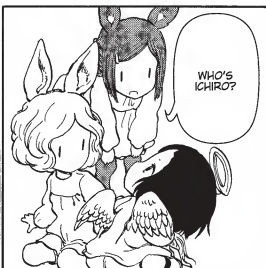


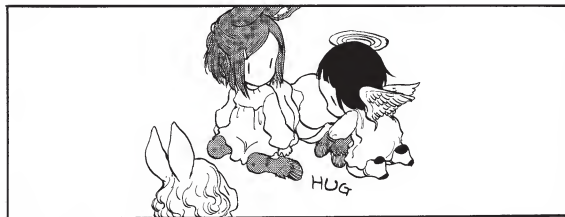
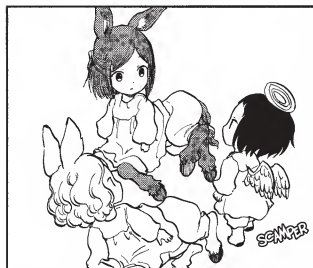
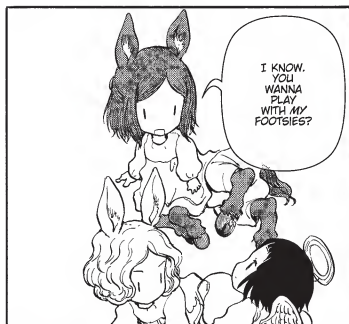
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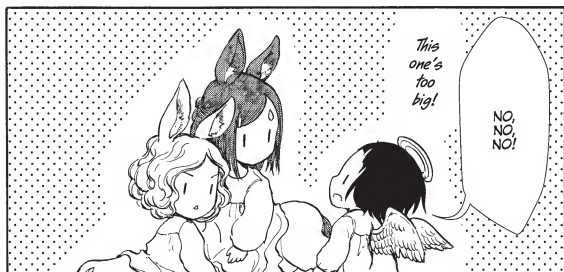
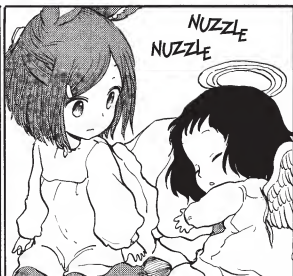
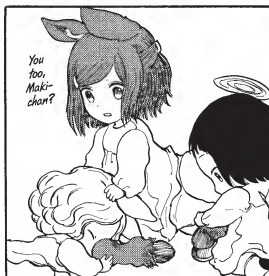


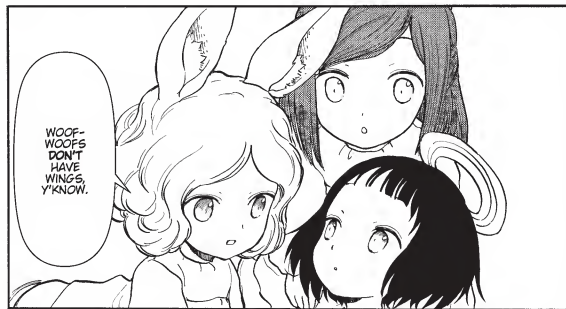
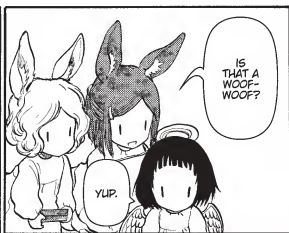
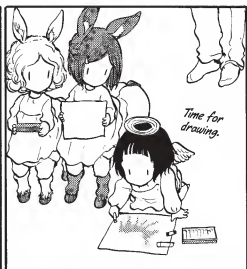
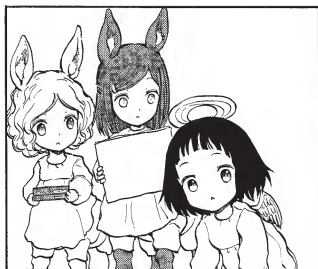


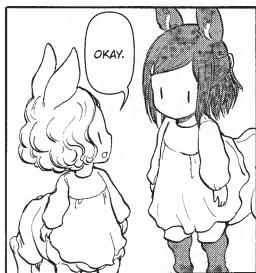


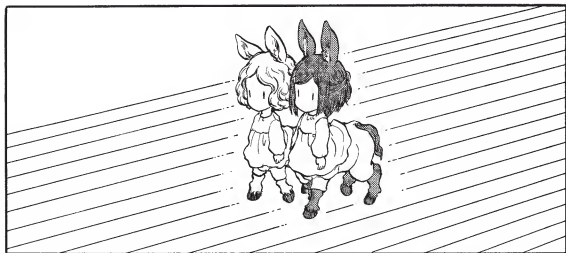


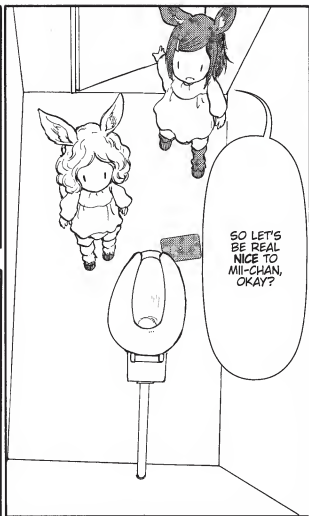
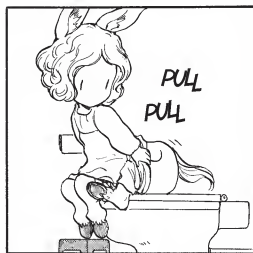
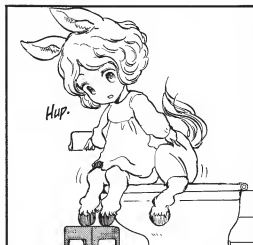


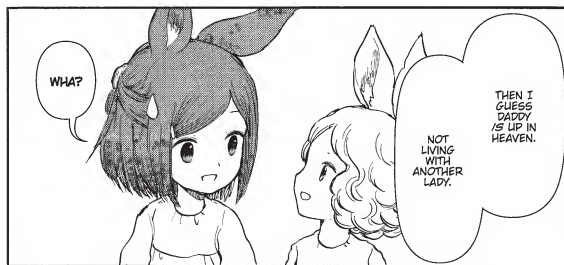
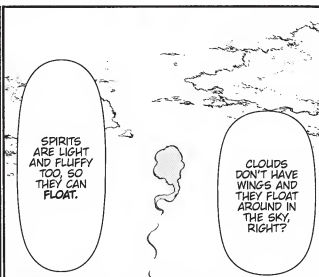


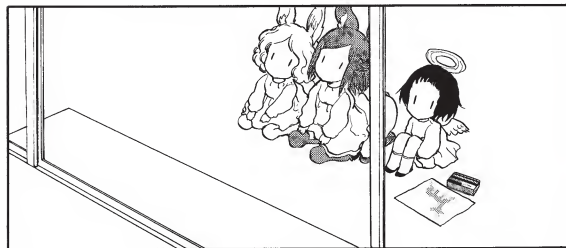
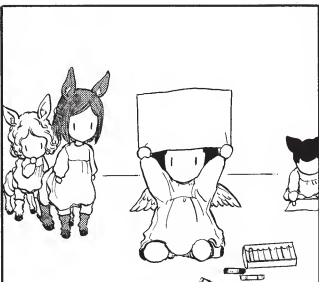


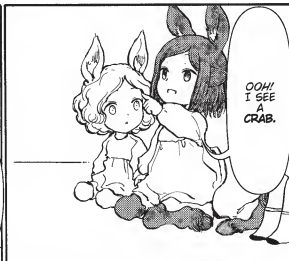
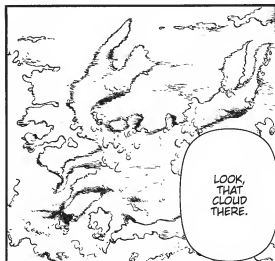
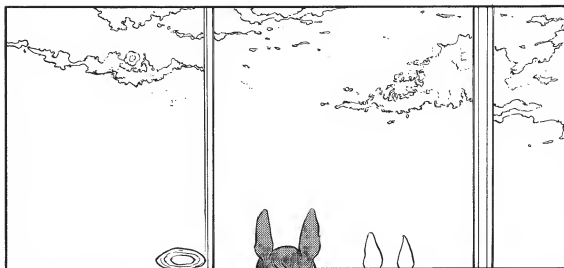


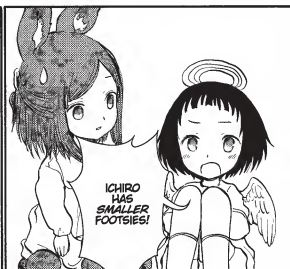
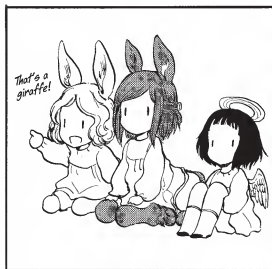
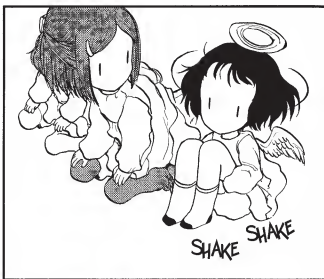
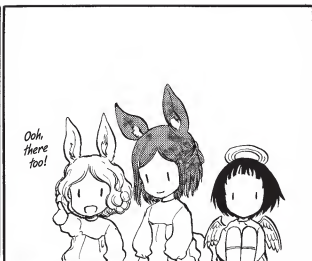


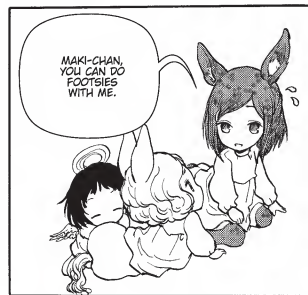
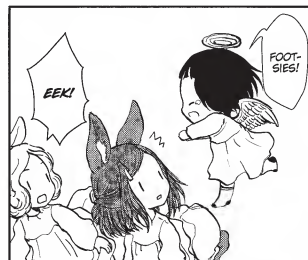
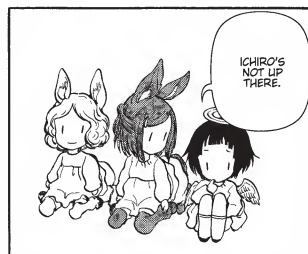
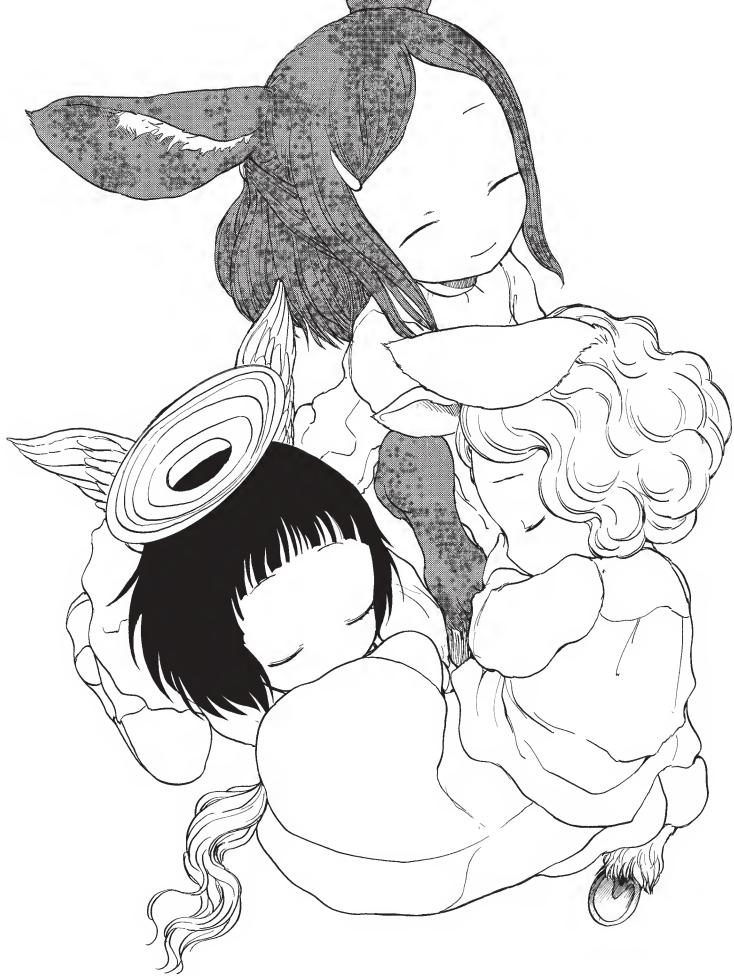


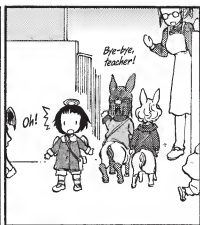






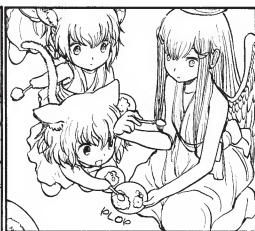
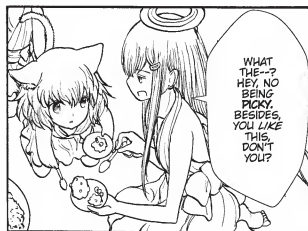
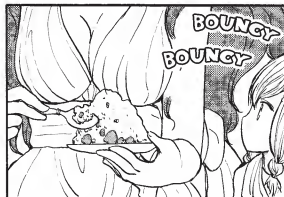
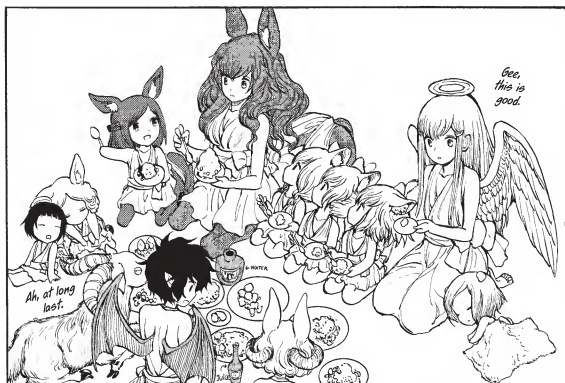


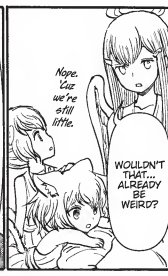




A CentaUr's Life

AFTERWORD...







THE RISING PHOENIX OF HIDACHI

In the Warring States (Sengoku) period, the Yuki, Satake, Uesugi, and Hōjō forces surrounded the once-great Oda clan. The Oda clan had once ranked among the *Kantō Hachi-Yakata*, or eight governing families of the Kantō region, but its forces were now unable to do anything more than hold its position in southern Kantō. Though the Oda were able to push back the Yuki forces by allying with the Hōjō, this invited attacks from the Uesugi, who were vying with the Hōjō for control of Kantō, as well as from the Uesugi's allies, the Satake. In the first month of the year 1564 (Eiroku 7), the Oda clan headquarters of Oda Castle (in the modern-day city of Kanata) was captured by Uesugi Kenshin**, and Oda Ujiharu fled to Tsuchiura Castle (in modern-day Tsuchiura). Tsuchiura Castle, too, would be captured in the fourth month of that same year, only for the Oda Castle to be reclaimed by Ujiharu in the twelfth month of the following year. The Oda Castle would be lost once again in the second month of the following year after yet another assault by the Satake and Uesugi clans, and Ujiharu would once again flee to Tsuchiura. Historical records indicate that survivors captured during this time were sold off as slaves for twenty to thirty *zeni*. *Sengoku daimyō* were as empires in and of themselves, and they could become extremely rich and powerful by conquering and plundering other lands. On the other hand, those who failed to do so would starve to death or be forced to live alongside one another in poverty.

In 1568, Oda Ujiharu would declare surrender to Uesugi Kenshin, thereby allowing the reclamation of Oda Castle... albeit with strings attached. The Satake forces continued to close in, however, and although Ujiharu did succeed in defending the central headquarters of Oda Castle, Yatabe Castle was lost. Yatabe Castle stood in the same location of what is now known as Yakata City, meaning that the Satake forces now had now secured ground uncomfortably close to Oda headquarters.

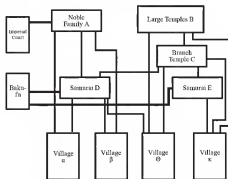
On the first day of the year 1573, with the Oda Castle's guard lowered for the new year's *renga* festival, the Satake launched another assault, and Ujiharu fled yet again to Tsuchiura. Though Oda Castle was quickly reclaimed this time, Ujiharu was defeated in the Battle of Tehaizaka later that year, and Oda Castle was again lost to the Satake. While the Oda had lost their central dominion, they nevertheless fought on tenaciously, enlisting the aid of the Hōjō, and so it was that Ujiharu would become known to future generations as the "Rising Phoenix of Hidachi."

However, in the year 1590 (Tensho 18), the Oda waged what was to be their final attempt to reclaim Oda Castle--the Battle of Hinoguchi. This ended in failure, and with the trusty Hōjō clan entrenched in battle with Toyotomi Hideyoshi, there was no hope of reclaiming Oda Castle.

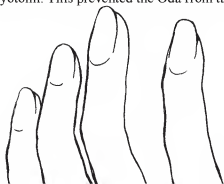
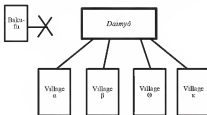
In the end, the Oda clan became entrenched in conflict with the Satake, which had pledged fealty to Toyotomi. This prevented the Oda from taking part in the Battle of Odawara, and Toyotomi took control of all domains, wiping out a number of *daimyō* legacies.

And so it was that the Oda clan's homeland--that is, modern-day Kanata city--changed from a political center to a simple farming village, as it was to stay for many years to come.

Control of land prior to Muromachi period:



Control of land during Sengoku period:



**This Uesugi was not Yamauchi Uesugi, who held the post of Kantō Kanrei for many years, but rather Uesugi Kenshin, who was previously known as Nagao Kagetora until succeeding the family line.

THE END OF MEDIEVAL JAPAN AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN ERA

What was the “medieval” era in Japan? Simply put, the term refers to the era in which there was no centralized political regime, as well as the self-sufficient, self-enforcing society of that era, which was divided amongst countless disparate domains. Private manors or plots of land known as *shōen* were owned by powerful court nobles, regents, and large temples. However, the *shōen* were not all managed directly, but rather entrusted to the care of lower-level noble families, temples, and shrines, who in turn had samurai to act as actual on-site stewards of the land. They in turn had local magistrates, and soon. It was in this way that operation of the *shōen* was managed by way of sub-contract, sub-sub-contract, and even sub-sub-sub-contract, each level of the hierarchy receiving a corresponding share of the land. Samurai quarreled with one another over territory*, and the Kamikura Bakufu was formed to serve as an interest-regulating entity. Initially, the Bakufu only exercised control over a lower-ranking class of vassals known as *gokenin*. Meanwhile, the would-be central governing force that was the Imperial court no longer saw direct control over the land nor provided its financial or executive backing. Government functions were instead segmented across multiple clans.

There was no way to uphold a system of law and order under these circumstances, meaning the protection of oneself and one's rights came down to the strength and ability of the individual. Villages began establishing their own laws and operating as self-governing entities known as *sōson*, which would in turn either unite or clash with other *sōson*, looking to formidable bands of samurai for protection. Various allegiances formed and peppered the land, with skirmishes between *sōson* turning into all-out wars between samurai. This was medieval Japan.

However, the downfall of the Muromachi Bakufu, which was itself comprised of powerful *daimyō*, brought about the beginning of the Warring States (*Sengoku*) period. Territorial control, which had become highly fragmented, was once again unified under *daimyō* authority. Neither the conflict-resolving executive authorities, known as shugo, nor the Bakufu could interfere with *daimyō*. *Sōson* and samurai, once a major source of unrest, were forbidden from taking part in personal conflicts, and were in turn given the right to present the *daimyō* with proper lawsuits. Unified law was established, and the *daimyō* gained both judicial and executive privileges. Indeed, the *daimyō* had established a modern nation with one centralized government. It was the beginning of the modern age.

*Granted, this was only in the beginning. Starting with the late Kamikura period, land ownership became increasingly unified (a trend known as *honjo ichienchika*). Unification of ownership meant the loss of ownership for some, of course, and it was specifically the noble families who once claimed ownership over *shōen* that now had to yield to the samurai who directly oversaw those lands.



SEVEN SEAS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

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story and art by **KEI MURAYAMA**

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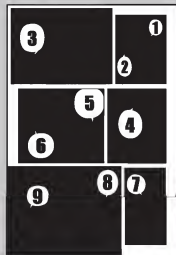
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